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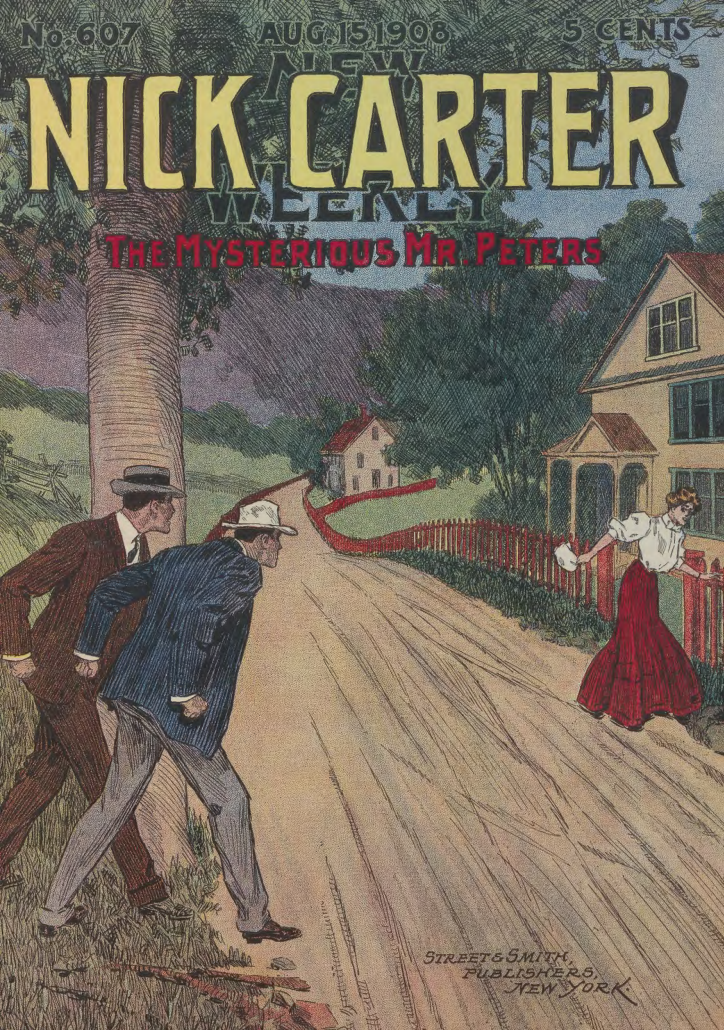
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE MYSTERIOUS MR. PETERS



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NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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The Mysterious Mr. Peters;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S UNKNOWN ENEMY.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS ADVERTISEMENT.

Nick Carter laid the morning paper beside his breakfast-plate, was silent a moment, and then, addressing Patsy Garvan, his second assistant, who was seated at his right, he said:

"Patsy, if your morals were not opposed to the idea, if the ethics of right living did not interfere, do you believe that you could instruct a person contemplating a crime how it might be consummated with little or no danger of discovery?"

Patsy was thoughtful.

"I don't know," he said, at last. "It would depend upon the person to be instructed, more than upon the instructor."

"Probably."

"I do think, however, that if I were to turn to crime myself, I could give even you a hard run before you could nail me."

"Very likely."

"Why did you ask me the question, chief?"

"Because of an ad I just saw in the morning paper."

"Oh! Do you mind telling me what it is?"

"Not at all. I will read it to you."

"Please."

"Listen, then: '*Advertisement Extraordinary!* In return for an adequate consideration, I will agree to instruct any person who is contemplating a crime of any kind, how it may be consummated without danger of discovery. To reply to this advertisement, write the figure four in chalk on the pavement at the following named corners successively, between the hours of eight and ten, every evening this week. S. E. corner University Place and Fourteenth Street; N. W. corner Third Avenue and Fourteenth Street; S. W. corner Sixth Avenue and Forty-third Street; N. E. corner Eighth Avenue and Twenty-third Street; and N. W. corner Third Avenue and Eighteenth Street. I will do all that is necessary thereafter to secure an interview. DETECTIVE.' What do you think of that, Patsy?"

"It sounds rather absurd, doesn't it?"

"Yes. But does it also sound genuine?"

"That depends, I should say, upon one's definition of the word genuine."

"Go ahead, Patsy. I want to hear you construe the wording of that advertisement. 'Construe,' as my Latin professor used to say."

"Well, my idea would be that the ad itself is genuine enough, but that the motive behind it may be something entirely different from that which seems to appear on the surface."

"Bravo! What would you suggest as the motive behind it?"

"I don't think I can reply to that—quite."

"The method given for responding to the advertisement is rather ingenious," said Nick, after a pause.

"Decidedly, chief."

"For instance: This is Sunday. If I were a person to whom that advertisement appealed, and if, therefore, I decided to reply to it, I would provide myself with a piece of chalk, and at eight o'clock, or a little before, to-night, I would visit, one after another, each of the places designated, prepared to write down the figure four as described."

Patsy nodded.

"The ad says they must be visited in the order named. There are five of them. I must cover all of them between eight and ten o'clock. You will observe, if you study them, that the places are arranged so that considerable time will be required in visiting them all. In fact, about all of the two hours would be consumed."

"Yes. I had thought of that."

"Now, on the other hand, if you were the person who advertised, it would be necessary for you to be at only one of those five places."

"Sure."

"If you will stop a moment to think, you will recall the fact that there is a saloon on each one of the corners named."

"That is so, by Jove!"

"You, as the advertiser, would need to stand only where you could keep the respective corners, or any one of them, in view, between the specified hours."

"Yes."

"You might be inside of one of those saloons, looking out of a window; you might be outside; you might even have two or three acquaintances with you while you watched and waited—acquaintances who had no idea of your reasons for being there, and their presence would effectually shield you from suspicion on the part of any officer or detective who was instructed to watch for you."

"Sure thing."

"Again, you would not have to loiter long enough at or near such a corner as to attract attention, for you could anticipate the time of my arrival at each of them almost to a minute—or, at least, within a very few minutes."

"That's so."

"If I were at the corner of University Place and Fourteenth Street at eight, I should arrive at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourteenth within fifteen minutes thereafter."

"Yes."

"Allow half an hour, or approximately that, for the next rendezvous, at Forty-third and Sixth Avenue; and so on."

"I see."

"Then, again, you would not have to stand watch every night, or any particular night. You could select your own time. You would need only to see one figure made, and only once. You would spot the man who made it, and take your own time in making yourself known to him. You might do it the following day, or the following week, or a month later. You could watch your man and accost him in a crowd, or when he was alone on the street with no one near, or in any manner and at any time or place that suited you. It is a clever ad, Patsy."

"It is that."

"What do you think of the signature?"

"Eh?"

"The ad is signed, 'A Detective.'"

"Oh, I take that to be merely a catch-note. The man who put that ad in the paper is evidently a crook."

"I agree with you there."

"And the purpose behind it all should be blackmail."

"Evidently; at least, in the end it would develop into that."

"Why not in the beginning?"

"Because, if the person who responded to the advertisement was sincere, as would likely be the case, the advertiser would wait until the crime was committed, or, at least, attempted, before blackmail was attempted."

"That's true."

"He certainly has figured out a very crafty method of receiving his replies to the ads."

"It is worthy of the Black Hand fellows, chief."

"The Black Hand! They never thought of anything as slick as that. Don't you see that the chances for any detective to spot the advertiser in this case are reduced to a minimum?"

"Yes."

There was a moment of silence, and then Patsy remarked:

"There is one way in which, perhaps, the whole scheme might be spotted."

The detective smiled, anticipating what his assistant was about to say.

"Well?" he inquired.

"Suppose you assigned me to that particular case, if it happened to be a case."

"Yes? Well, in such an event, how would you go to work?"

"I should not bother at all about the man who advertised. I would devote my attention to the man who answered it."

"Well, go on."

"It would be dead easy to discover him while he was in the act of making that figure in chalk."

"Sure; and then——"

"Why, then merely keep him in sight until the advertiser chose to approach him. Have him shadowed day and night. Ultimately he would take me to the man who inserted the ad."

"I think, Patsy, in that case you would have about the most delicate bit of shadowing on your hands that you ever attempted."

"Why so?"

"Well, for one thing, you would be working in absolute darkness. All the advantage would be on the side of the man you were trying to find; the advertiser."

"But——"

"Wait a moment. Don't you suppose he has anticipated that very thing? Don't you suppose he has thought of all that and prepared himself for it?"

"Likely enough."

"You may be sure that he has. He would get onto your shadow-work, while you would have no possible way of getting onto him. He could wait indefinitely, until you gave the thing up in sheer disgust. His man—the one who answered the ad—would be his 'meat' a year from now as well as tomorrow, for a man who contemplates one crime will not stop at that. No, Patsy, your scheme wouldn't work at all."

"Then how would *you* go at it?"

"I don't know."

"You are not thinking of taking the matter up, then?"

"Not at all. It is a case for the police; not for me. It merely interested me, that is all. But some one connected with the police department will see that ad and will call the attenion of the commissioner, or McCafferty, to it."

"Do you suppose they will take cognizance of it?"

"I should suppose they would. If I were the chief, I would do so."

"If the commissioner should take it up, chief, I prophesy that he will send for you."

"I hardly think so. At least not at once. I rather incline to the idea that he would suppose the department could take good care of it. You see, the difficulties of the case do not appear visibly on the surface. For instance, that idea that you just suggested about keeping tabs on the man who replies to the ad; it appealed to you because you did not stop to consider that the advertiser had also thought of the same thing. It would also appeal to the police; but you might just as well follow any man you pass on the street as try to accomplish what you wish to do in that manner."

"I rather think I would like to try it, all the same, chief."

"Humph!" said Nick; and the conversation closed for the time being.

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER ACCEPTS THE CASE.

It was early in the afternoon of the same day when Joseph announced to the detective that the police commissioner was in the library, where he had requested to be shown, awaiting him; and when Nick entered the room, and the two had exchanged the usual greetings, the commissioner asked:

"Nick, did you happen to notice rather an amazing advertisement in the paper this morning?"

"Do you refer to that one that is signed 'Detective'?" Nick asked, smiling.

"Yes."

"I saw it; yes."

"What did you think of it?"

"I scarcely know. Patsy and I discussed it at the time. It had since almost passed from my mind."

"Did you regard it as genuine, or as a hoax?"

"Oh, it struck me as genuine enough, as far as it goes."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that nobody can tell what motive is behind it, although there is apparently some well-defined reason for the insertion."

"Do you suppose that the fellow was really advertising for some one who wishes to commit a crime without being caught?"

"It certainly reads that way, commissioner."

"I know; but would anybody be fool enough to reply to such an advertisement, even though he did wish to commit a crime?"

"I can't answer as to that. You know there are lots of fools in the world, and the biggest ones in the bunch are criminals, or would-be criminals."

"I guess that is true enough."

"I regard the thing, commissioner, as a bait that is thrown out by an expert crook."

"A bait? What sort of a bait?"

"Well, we will suppose that blackmail is hidden behind it somewhere."

"I had that idea in mind, too."

"I should say, if I said anything about it at all, that the advertisement is in the nature of an experiment."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, take a clever crook, for example—possibly one who has just been released from a term of imprisonment, and who finds himself not oversupplied with funds."

"Yes."

"Such a man might wish to raise the 'wind' somehow, and yet, at the same time, feel the necessity of keeping pretty thoroughly under cover. The idea of this advertisement might have occurred to such a character, and he has attempted it merely to see what would come of it."

"He was clever about it, all right."

"Yes."

"Do you think you could spot him?"

"Eventually, I suppose I could. He has laid out a plan through which it would be quite difficult to follow him; but still, there was never yet a crime committed which could not be worked out to a solution in time."

"But here there has been no crime committed; it is merely that one is anticipated."

"Yes; but in the end it amounts to the same thing."

"Possibly. I have been wondering, ever since I read that advertisement, if I ought to take cognizance of it."

"As the commissioner of police, I should reply yes, by all means."

"Will you do it, Nick?"

"Unfortunately, I don't think I could devote much time to it; that is, the amount of time that would be necessary—at least, not at present. I can let you have Patsy, if you would like that, and when I return—I am going out of town for a few days—I would assist him."

"Patsy, eh?"

"Yes. He expressed a good deal of interest in the advertisement. I think he would rather like to follow it up."

"All right; put him on the job, and let's see what he makes of it."

"He will make all out of it that can be made, you may be sure of that."

The commissioner was silent and thoughtful for a moment. Then he said:

"Look here, Nick; do you believe you could do such a thing as that if you tried?"

"As what?"

"Why, teach a chap how to commit a stated crime and avoid discovery afterward?"

"I asked Patsy that question, and he replied to it as I will do now. It would depend upon the individual who wished to be taught."

"Hmm! Yes. The whole thing has a foolish look to me; and yet I haven't been able to get that advertisement out of my mind since I read it this morning. You see, if some one does respond to that advertisement, it will likely be a person who belongs to the upper crust of society, so to speak."

"Oh, not necessarily."

"I think so. Anyhow, it would be a man who——"

"I should say it more likely be a woman."

"I don't know but you are right about that. Well, my curiosity is aroused, anyhow, and I am bound to find out more about it. Where is Patsy?"

"He is out at present. But if you wish me to put him on the case, I will do so."

"Do it, then. Tell him that I will detail any of my men, or as many as he wants, to assist him."

"All right. I suppose you realize, don't you, commissioner, that it is not a crime, or even a misdemeanor, to write a figure four in chalk on the pavement at a street-corner?"

"Certainly."

"And that no arrest could be made for such a thing?"

"Why, of course I do."

"Well, what is it that you would like to have done, then?"

"I want to find out who inserted that advertisement."

"And then, when we know that much?"

"When you are sure, arrest that individual as a suspicious person."

"What good would that do?"

"Give it up, Nick. It might satisfy my curiosity, however."

"I don't think so."

"Well, then, keep an eye on the chap who answers it—the one who makes the figures. After all, he will be the prospective criminal."

"He, or she. Yes."

"We will say he, meaning either."

"Very well."

"A crime which might prove a serious one may be prevented, eh?"

"Possibly."

"How would it do, Nick, for me to send out one of my plain-clothes men to write those figures? What do you think of that idea?"

"It wouldn't do at all. I don't think anything of the idea."

"Why not?"

"Because your advertiser has already thought of that possibility, and is prepared for it. You may rely upon it that he has arranged things so that he will not be caught napping."

"Likely enough."

"He would spot such a subterfuge as you suggest, in a moment. He would only laugh at you for the effort."

"Probably."

"Besides, we are not the only ones who have seen that advertisement."

"I should say not."

"And doubtless there are several interested parties already considering it."

"Eh? Do you think that?"

"Why not? How many people do you suppose are already figuring out in their own minds the probabilities of the genuineness of the advertisement? I suppose there are thousands of persons in this city alone to-day who would commit this crime or that one if only they dared to do so."

"Yes; I guess that is true."

"The very people to whom that advertisement would be attractive because of the possibilities it opens up, would be conning it now with the very same misgivings that we feel about it. They are asking themselves if it is genuine. They are wondering if it may not be a ruse of the police. They are wondering if they dare write those figures on the respective corners, and what would come of it if they did so,"

"I notice that you persistently make use of the plural, Nick. That would presuppose that more than one would answer; do you think so?"

"There are just as likely to be a dozen as one; or as likely to be a hundred as a dozen, commissioner."

"I had not thought of that."

The detective smiled broadly; then he said:

"Suppose you were one of those people, and you should go to the first corner stated in the ad, and that when you got there you found a figure four already written on the pavement? I would like you to tell me what you would do in that case."

"I don't know. That is another possibility that had not occurred to me."

"Would you go away leaving your own figure unwritten? Or would you write another four near the one that preceded you?"

"I think I would give up the idea, for the time being, and leg it as rapidly as possible for the second or the third corner, where I would watch for the chap who was making the circuit."

"But has it not occurred to you, with that thought, that your very attitude would inform the man who was watching—the advertiser—of your intention, even though you did not make a figure?"

"No; it did not occur to me."

"Well, if he is as slick an article as that advertisement would suggest, he would catch 'onto' what you had intended to do, and did not do, at once. You would be spotted by him exactly the same as if you had written the figure."

"I see it now."

"And you may depend upon it it will not be the person who makes the figure who will be the first one the advertiser will arrange to interview. It will be one who did not write, but who had the appearance of wishing to do so; of having gone there for that purpose. And he will have a good opportunity to select the very best material for his plans."

"There are a good many more possibilities about this matter than I supposed."

"There are many combinations to it, commissioner."

"I wish you were going to take up the affair yourself."

"Later I will. At present Patsy will do fully as well."

"Anyhow, Nick, I think I will take a look at those corners myself to-night."

"It wouldn't be at all a bad idea, commissioner. It would inform the advertiser that the department has taken cognizance of his act."

CHAPTER III.

THE DETECTIVE THROWS OUT BAIT.

Shortly after the departure of the commissioner, Nick Carter also left his house, after informing Joseph that he should be absent, he thought, several days, although he might return at almost any time.

He also left a note for Patsy, in which he informed him of the commissioner's call, and the result of it. He closed by saying:

"I have told him that you may take the case, so you can begin on it at once. I shall make no suggestions. Handle it in your own way and to suit yourself. The commissioner offers you as much assistance from his office as you may require, and for the rest—it is up to you."

Then, in order to keep his word good that he was going out of the city—that is what he had told the commissioner—he boarded the Twenty-third Street car, and took the ferry for Jersey City.

But he did not remain there a very long time. He went to a house where a friend lived, and there arrayed himself in a disguise different from any that either of his assistants had ever seen.

At five o'clock that evening he passed through the Pennsylvania railroad-station, in time so that he could join the throng that was leaving one of the trains for the ferry, and he recrossed the river to Twenty-third Street with those passengers, went to a hotel on Fourth Avenue, where he registered as John Antwerp, Philadelphia, ate a hearty dinner, loitered about the hotel till half-past seven, and then, cane in hand, walked out again.

If you had watched him narrowly, you would have noticed that he did not use the cane to aid in walking.

He swung it quite naturally, but he did not once put the end of it to the pavement.

The reason for that was that there was a piece of chalk nicely fitted into the ferrule at the end of it; and it will be seen by this fact that Nick Carter did intend to work on the case, although he had given others reason to suppose that he would not do so.

In appearance, he was a gray-mustached man of middle age; a respectable-looking party. He had dressed himself plainly, but well.

It was a quarter to eight when he arrived at the first corner where the advertisement had directed the figure four to be made, and he passed at once inside the saloon that is located there.

He could discover no one there, however, who appeared to be watching, and so he passed out again presently by the side door, hesitated just a moment on the corner at what he considered to be about the right spot.

With a hasty glance around him, he saw nobody who appeared to be watching; but, nevertheless, with the chalk in the end of his cane he traced the required figure faintly on the stones, waited a moment while he lighted a fresh cigar, and then strolled leisurely away toward Third Avenue.

He purposely consumed considerable time in getting there, walking the distance rather leisurely, so that all of twenty minutes had elapsed before he arrived.

Again he entered the corner saloon—it will be remembered that one is located on each corner that had been designated in the advertisement.

As before, he could not determine definitely that any person was watching, and he made no attempt to watch out himself. That would have been fatal to the plan he had adopted.

He loitered in the saloon several minutes, then went out again, and he almost permitted himself to smile when he discovered that a figure four had already been written quite plainly in chalk on the pavement.

He had more than half-expected that. It was why he had consumed so much time in getting there; why he had remained so long inside the saloon.

However, it did not alter his plans, for he had already determined just what he would do.

He stood for a time near the curb, exactly on the corner, swinging his cane; and finally, after a cautious glance around him—just such a look around as he might have used had he been entirely sincere in his desire to make the figures without being seen save by the party interested—he again made use of the end of his cane, and inscribed the number directly *above* the one that was already there.

After he wrote the number he still remained where he was for at least five minutes. Then he entered the saloon again, and stayed there five minutes more. Then he returned through Fourteenth Street to the subway, entered it, and got out again at Times Square.

He crossed Broadway, walked up that thoroughfare to Forty-third Street, and turned through toward Sixth Avenue.

When he arrived at the next corner indicated in the advertisement—the southwest corner of Sixth Avenue and Forty-third Street—he was walking very slowly indeed; and he saw, while he was still some distance away, that already *two* figures four had been written there.

As he was passing the spot, he pulled his handkerchief from his pocket, dropped it as if by accident, stooped to recover it, and, when he straightened up again, he left upon the stone at the corner a third figure four.

As before, it was written *above* the others.

He did not glance to the right or the left; he did not enter the saloon; instead, he kept on his way, turning the corner southward, and finally he ascended to the elevated station on the down-town side at Forty-second Street.

He left the L at Twenty-third Street, took a cross-town car to Eighth Avenue—and on this particular journey he made all possible speed without attracting attention.

He knew when he arrived at the corner where the figure was to be made that no person could have beaten him there without making the distance in an automobile; and he was, therefore, not surprised when he discovered that no marked figure preceded him this time.

The pavement at the corner was innocent of any suggestion of a chalk-mark, and he lost no time in inscribing his own, pausing in his walk only long enough to do so, and then entered the saloon, where he took his station near a window that commanded a view of the corner by peering over the screen.

Thus far, at each corner, Nick had kept an eye out for Patsy, although he had seen no sign of him; or, it may as well be said at once, did he appear that night. Whatever method the assistant had adopted, it evidently did not involve a watch of the corners that particular night.

But presently while he remained there at the window watching, a man came suddenly into view who walked rapidly to the corner, stopped, looked down as if surprised, half-stooped as if to write the figure, then straightened himself and walked away rapidly without having done so.

Nick looked at his watch. Then he selected a chair at one of the tables in the place, and, seating himself, began to read a paper he had purchased on the street; and he continued to read until the time lacked only twenty minutes of ten.

Then he went out, boarded a cross-town car, and rode to Third Avenue, walked down to the northeast corner of Eighteenth Street, which was the last of the designated points.

There was just one inscription there, and Nick added his own to it, after which he returned to his hotel and went to bed.

The following evening, instead of repeating the performance of the preceding night, as the advertisement directed, he went to the theater. He paid no attention whatever to the corners he had visited so assiduously twenty-four hours earlier; at least, he did not do so until after the theater was out; but then he took a cab and drove the rounds, backward.

That is, he began at Third Avenue and Eighteenth Street, and went backward over the ground he had covered the preceding evening.

Figures had been made at each of the corners that night, and he was satisfied that they were not those that had been there before. They were located somewhat differently.

The following morning he paid his bill at the hotel, crossed the ferry, and took a train for Philadelphia.

The reader will discover presently why the detective considered it wise to conduct himself in precisely this manner.

He realized, as has already been surmised by the conversation held with the commissioner, that he was probably dealing with as slick a crook as was ever outside a prison. He was baiting the crook, instead of permitting the crook to bait him.

He purposely took an early train, and, when he arrived at Philadelphia, went to the Continental, and registered the same name he had used at the Fourth Avenue hotel in New York; and he remained there two days.

Wednesday morning he purchased the same paper in which the original advertisement had appeared, and in the same location of the paper he found this:

"FIGURE 4. Middle-aged, gray mustache. Cane. If you mean business, appear again."

That was all.

There was no signature; but it was evident that the advertisement was intended for him. The bait he had used was inviting, at least.

He returned to New York on the first train after that, and repaired at once to the same hotel where he had stopped before. At the desk he inquired:

"Did any one call for me while I was away? I think likely that a gentleman did so, probably the morning I went away, or some time during that day."

"Yes, sir," replied the clerk. "Now that you mention it, I remember that there was a call for you. But it was a lady, Mr. Antwerp."

"Ah! A lady. Was there any message?"

"No, sir."

"Thank you. If there should be another call for me, will you please ascertain the name? I was not expecting a lady; however, it might have been merely a messenger."

That night, at precisely eight o'clock, he was at the corner of University Place and Fourteenth Street again, and, as before, with great caution, he made the figure four on the pavement. And he made the entire round again, much as he had done it before, although this time he made no more marks.

He visited each place, looked around him, entered each one of the saloons, loitered at or near the corner, and passed on.

At the corner of Twenty-third Street and Eighth Avenue he saw Patsy, this time.

The assistant was across the street, near the entrance to a telegraph-office that is there; but as Nick made no mark at the corner, and did not go near enough to it to make it appear that he even wished to do so, Patsy's attention was not attracted to him.

But if Nick did not make chalk-marks on the stones, there were others who did.

At one of the corners there were two of them; at another there were three; at the others there was only one, save at Twenty-third and Eighth Avenue, and there he did not go close enough to determine how many there might be, although he thought he saw one, from a distance.

When he returned to his hotel he entered the café and ordered a bit of luncheon; and presently there strolled into the place a tall, rather distinguished-appearing individual, who seated himself at an adjoining table and ordered a cocktail.

He sipped at it while Nick was eating his sandwich, and presently, as if he was desirous of company, he addressed a remark to the detective.

"New York is about the loneliest place on earth if you don't happen to have friends with you, don't you think so?" he inquired genially.

Nick stared at him a moment without replying; then he said coldly:

"Yes. But, as it happens, I have friends here, if I cared to look them up."

"Well, all I've got to say is, you're lucky that——"

He stopped, for Nick had risen and walked away. This was another bit of the detective's bait.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS MISS MASON.

Throughout all this preliminary play it had been Nick Carter's desire to have it appear that he was extremely desirous of avoiding attracting attention to himself.

For example, his conduct in the instance recorded at the close of the preceding chapter.

If he had appeared too ready to engage in conversation with a stranger—always provided that the stranger happened to be associated with the person who had fathered the advertisement—it might have looked suspicious to the crook, or whatever the man was who was angling for a victim.

Nick did not know that the man who had addressed him in the café was not all that he appeared to be. He might have been merely a guest at the hotel who was lonely, as he said he was; but, on the other hand, there was the possibility that he might be the man of the advertisement, and Nick chose to act on the supposition that he was.

The detective retired at once to his room and went to bed. He was playing the waiting game; had played it all along, believing that, in the end, if he played it patiently and well, the person he sought would come to him; whereas, if he had taken the initiative and tried to pursue that person—well, he thought the plan he had adopted to be by far the better one.

He was at breakfast the following morning—a late breakfast, for it was a part of his plan to appear to have nothing to do—when a card was brought to him, and, glancing at it, he read the name: "Miss Pauline Mason."

He remained gazing at the card for a moment, and then said to the servant who had brought it to him:

"Where is the lady?"

"In the parlor, sir."

"Are you quite sure that she asked for Mr. Antwerp?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go back to her and ask if there is not some mistake. I do not know the lady. I am sure that I never heard of her. The name is entirely unfamiliar to me. If it is really I whom she wishes to see, I will go to her, of course; but I am sure there must be a mistake. Tell her exactly what I have said."

The servant returned inside of five minutes.

"The lady says there is no mistake, sir," he announced. "She says you do not know her, but that

she has a message for you which she must deliver in person."

"Very well. Please tell her that I will be with her in a few moments."

When the boy had gone, Nick Carter smiled at his own reflection in the mirror opposite where he was seated.

"It begins to look as though things were coming to a head," was what he was thinking. "I suppose this must be the same 'lady' who called upon me the morning after I left the hotel to go to Philadelphia; and she can have only one object in calling."

He finished his breakfast leisurely, and then took his way to the parlor.

Over in a far corner the lady was seated, and as she was the only person in the parlor at the time, there could be no doubt that she was the one who had sent the card.

She was attired rather elegantly, Nick thought, but in good taste. Her gown was faultless in style and fit; a thin veil only concealed her features sufficiently to render them the more attractive. She was a very attractive person, indeed, as she rose to greet him, and he noticed that she was tall and willowy—and quite young; twenty-one or two, at the most, was what he thought.

Nick held the card in his hand, and he appeared to be rather puzzled; and as he came near enough he said:

"Miss Mason?"

"Yes," she replied, smiling through her veil.

"You must pardon me, Miss Mason, for the message I returned to you when I received your card, but as the name on it was entirely unfamiliar to me, I thought there must be a mistake. Am I really the person you wished to see?"

"Yes, Mr. Antwerp."

"And you have a message for me?"

"Yes."

"May I ask from whom it comes?"

"It is from a person whom you do not know."

"Indeed! That is rather curious, isn't it? Possibly the message itself will suggest an explanation of the mystery. May I ask you to tell me what it is?"

The woman smiled at him, and then replied demurely:

"It has reference to some use you have lately made of the figure four."

Nick appeared to hesitate a moment. Then he said:

"I am afraid I do not understand you, Miss Mason. Possibly I am dull of comprehension, but really you are more and more mystifying. There is certainly a mistake."

"I don't think so," she replied, still smiling.

"Possibly there is another Mr. Antwerp stopping here at the hotel," he suggested. "If you will pardon me, I will find out if there is."

He started to rise from the chair he had taken, but she reached out a hand and rested it upon his arm, detaining him.

"No," she said. "There is no other Mr. Antwerp here, and there is no mistake."

"Really, madam"—Nick spoke with studied coldness now—"at the risk of appearing discourteous, I must ask you to explain this riddle for me—or to excuse me. Which shall it be? It is for you to say."

"Have you no interest in the figure four?" she asked.

"None whatever."

"Have you not lately been carrying a cane which contains a piece of chalk embedded in the ferrule, and——"

Nick left his chair again.

"Miss Mason," he said, "you really must excuse me. The 'figure four; a cane with a piece of chalk.' Upon my word, madam, I do not know what to make of you."

"Be seated again, Mr. Antwerp, if you please. Thank you. I will not detain you very long. A certain advertisement appeared in one of the papers in this city last Sunday morning which you have been attempting to answer. I am here concerning that advertisement."

Nick smiled at her indulgently, and then said dryly:

"I think if you would apply at the psycopathic ward at Bellevue Hospital——"

"Nonsense, Mr. Antwerp. You are carrying your caution altogether too far. You understand perfectly well to what I refer. We are entirely alone in this parlor. There is no one to overhear what we may choose to say to each other. Now will you talk about the business that brought you to this city?"

"How do you know that I do not live in the city?" he asked.

"The person who advertised is of that opinion."

"Who advertised what? What are you trying to talk about?"

"Oh, dear! You make me tired! You do, indeed!" It was a little bit of slang into which she dropped quite naturally.

"I am sorry," said Nick.

"Will you talk with me about the business?" she asked again.

"About what business, madam?"

"About the business that brought you here. About the advertisement you answered."

"I never talk business, madam, save with principals."

"Come. That sounds better. We are getting at it at last."

"Are we?"

"Suppose I came here to take you to the principal?"

"Miss Mason, this begins to sound very much like an adventure. I am called upon at my hotel by a young and charming lady whom I do not know at all, and——"

"What is the use, Mr. Antwerp, in beating about the bush any longer? My patience is rapidly giving out. There was an advertisement in a paper which told any person who was interested in it to go to certain places at certain times, and make the figure four on the pavement with chalk. You did that, and I am here to take you, if you care to go, to the person you seek. Now, sir, take it or leave it."

"Oh, very well," replied Nick, with a sudden change of manner. "I'll take it. But you must admit that, in a case of this kind, it is well to be cautious."

"I think you rather overdo it, however."

"Oh, I don't know. Detectives might have read that advertisement, as well as I; and I have reasoned that, if I were a detective, it would have interested me almost as much as it did in the present case."

"Bother the detectives!"

"With all my heart."

"Are you prepared to go with me?"

"I think so. Where do we go?"

"We go for a ride in an automobile, first."

"Indeed! First you catch your motor, don't you?"

"Mine is at the door."

"Eh? Really? Do we go far? Shall I require my bag, do you think?"

"No. You will be back here again within a few hours."

"And the principal—the man who inserted the advertisement in the paper—is he awaiting us at the end of the journey?"

"Yes."

"Are you sufficiently informed about the matter, madam, to understand that I am to take some lessons, I believe? Eh?"

"Yes. It is something like going to school, isn't it?" she laughed.

"Something. Shall we call them French lessons? When do I begin?"

"After you have completed your arrangements for beginning, I should suppose."

"To be sure. You are not empowered to make those arrangements?"

"You said only a moment ago that you preferred to treat with the principal."

"True; but it has occurred to me that you might possibly be that principal."

"Do you suppose that a woman could instruct you as you wish to be instructed?"

"I don't know why not."

"Well, at all events, it is not a woman in this case. It is a man; and if you are ready to go with me I will take you there."

"Yes. I am ready. Or, rather, I will be in a moment. By the way, will I require any particular sum of money with me now?"

"No. You will not need that to-day."

"No advance payments, eh?" smiled Nick.

"As to that, sir, I do not know. I only know that for the interview you are to have to-day, to which I am to conduct you, you will not have occasion to use any money."

"Then I won't have to excuse myself from your presence at all. It was only to go to the desk, you know."

Miss Mason left her seat.

"Shall we go now?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the detective; and he followed her through the door and out of the hotel to the curb, where an automobile was awaiting them.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

Several times during that ride the detective was conscious of the fact that his companion was regarding him with more than ordinary interest.

He could feel her eyes upon him, and he knew that she was studying him attentively; but whether her interest was purely personal, or was tinged with that calculating quality of considering just how much he might be worth to them as a prospective victim, he could not determine.

The moment they entered the tonneau of the car

it started forward, the chauffeur appearing to know his destination perfectly without additional instruction from Miss Mason.

Their course lay up Fourth Avenue to Twenty-third Street, thence through to Madison Avenue, and thence north again to Seventy-second Street, where they turned and entered the park.

At One Hundred and Tenth Street they turned eastward again, and finally crossed the Willis Avenue bridge to the Bronx, and after that still northward and easterly, also, for rather a long drive, until, having passed along the outskirts of Larchmont, Nick knew that they were approaching Mamaroneck.

It was then that his companion said to him:

"I was requested to ask you if you would object to being blindfolded during the last part of our journey."

"I certainly should object," replied the detective emphatically, "even if the objection resulted in a discontinuance of our plans. I never go into anything blindfolded, and I certainly shall not enter upon this adventure in that manner."

"I expected you to refuse," she murmured, with a half-shrug of her shoulders.

"Besides," added the detective, after a pause, "it would do no good. I know every turn and twist of the roads about here."

"Then you do not come from such a distance from New York as you would make it appear," she said.

"Where I come from, or where I shall go after our transactions are over, does not matter," he returned.

"Do you care to tell me what sort of a crime it is that you are contemplating?" she questioned him, after another pause.

"No."

"You don't care to take me into your confidence?"

"Not unless you are the principal."

"And suppose I should say to you that I am?"

"Until you do say so, it will not be necessary for me to reply to that question. Do we go much farther?"

"No; we are nearly there. The house is between us and Harrisons."

The reader must understand that the detective was still playing his part with all the craft of which he was master. He was pretending to think only of himself and of his own safety; to regard the woman at his side merely as a go-between. Moreover, since he represented himself to be a man of middle age, he paid no more attention to her beauty and general attractiveness than was demanded by courtesy.

During the long drive he rarely turned his face toward her, and then only when in reply to a question he had asked, or to put one that had occurred to him.

At last the car came to a stop in front of a low brown house that stood well back from the road in the middle of an extensive lot which contained three or four acres of land.

"We have arrived," she said, and she sprang out of the car when the chauffeur opened the door. "Please follow me."

As they advanced along the graveled walk, the front door opened as if with invisible hands, and Miss Mason led the way inside, turning into a parlor situated at the right of the hallway.

"If you will be seated, please," she said, indicating a chair; and, before he could reply, turned and left him.

As soon as he was alone he looked about him with care.

The first glance he had devoted to the appearance of the room on entering it had suggested that the present tenants had not occupied the place a very long time; or, if they had, they were deficient in the arts of good housekeeping.

The parlor had been dusted, of course, but it had been done in a perfunctory manner, and evidently in haste. Moreover, there was the unmistakable odor suggestive of mustiness which told as plainly as words could have done that the room had been closed tightly until very recently.

In a word, it was at once evident to the detective that these people had engaged the house merely for the purposes to which they were now putting it.

The young woman was absent ten minutes or more, when she returned and said:

"Now, Mr. Antwerp, if you will please come with me, I will take you to the gentleman you wish to talk with."

Nick followed her from the room. She conducted him up the stairs to the second floor, and to a rear room, where, after tapping gently upon the panel of a door, she pushed it open and entered.

The curtains of this room had been drawn across the windows, rendering it almost dark. Only sufficient light to observe objects dimly entered there.

Within a huge chair, in a corner of the room near one of the windows, a person was seated who was so enveloped in a wrap of some kind that Nick could not determine whether it was a man or a woman, although he directly judged it to be the former.

The wrap had evidently once been used as a bath-

robe, and now the hood of it was drawn up over the head of its wearer, and had been pinned together beneath his chin. In addition to this, the man wore a black half-mask, from the bottom of which drooped a width of muslin of the same hue, the consequence of it all being that not a vestige of the face or form of the man so disguised could be seen.

Also, he wore gloves on his hands, as if he feared the possibility that he might at some later day be recognized even by them.

Altogether, there was an air of profound mystery about the affair that was interesting to the detective, and was further suggestive of earnest purpose on the part of the man who had advertised.

When the disguised man spoke, Nick smiled broadly, for he recognized instantly the fact that the fellow had stuffed each cheek with small metal bulbs into which several holes had been punched—a favorite method among a certain class of crooks for effectually disguising the voice.

Every utterance that came from the mouth under such conditions was hollow and changed, and accompanied by a sort of whistling sound, which rendered the voice entirely unrecognizable.

The man said:

"We can have our interview in safety here, my dear sir."

Instead of replying directly to the man, the detective turned to the young woman who had conducted him there, and he said:

"You called me overcautious not so very long ago; what do you call this?"

"I call it a *pre*caution," she replied, smiling.

"Oh! Not overcaution, eh?"

He noticed that the man gave a slight start as he addressed the woman, but it was so very slight that he paid no attention to it. He had not thought it necessary to disguise his own voice in addressing the woman; in fact, the idea had not occurred to him, and later he was to regret the fact.

The woman crossed to a chair in another corner, and seated herself; and Nick smiled, and said:

"I perceive that you are to assist at this interview, madam."

"I am obeying orders, sir," she responded; but the man in the robe instantly remarked:

"You may leave us, Pauline. We shall not need you. I wish, however, that you would prepare luncheon for us, so that we may have it in an hour. Mr. Antwerp will have discovered that he has an appetite by that time. Do you take coffee, Mr. Antwerp? Yes? Then, Pauline, do your level best with the coffee, won't you? And have it strong."

The woman shivered, as if a draft of cold air had struck her; but she answered smilingly:

"I think everything will be to your liking, gentlemen."

Then she went out, and the detective was alone with his strange host.

For a moment the idea occurred to him to leap forward and tear away the disguise that enveloped the man, and it was extremely unfortunate for him that he did not act upon that idea then and there; but he dismissed the thought as unnecessary.

"What is your name?" demanded the man in the robe, the instant the door was closed.

"You know me as Mr. Antwerp; let that suffice," replied Nick, with a touch of hauteur.

"It is not your own name, then?"

"Certainly not."

"And you would refuse to give me your address, I suppose?"

"Assuredly, sir. What is *your* name?"

"Tit for tat, eh? You may call me Peters. It will do as well as another name. No?"

"Any one will answer."

"You have come to me in response to the advertisement that appeared in the paper last Sunday morning, haven't you?"

"I think that goes without saying."

"Nevertheless, I wish you to answer distinctly, if we are to do business together."

"Very well. Yes, I did."

"I am to suppose, then, that you are contemplating a crime?"

"That would be the natural supposition."

"You do not give me a direct answer."

"It is as direct as you will get it. If it is your purpose to play with me, say so, and our interview will close at once. If you mean business, Peters, get busy."

"What sort of a crime do you wish to commit?"

"I will not reply to that question in a direct manner. Instead, I shall mention three different characters of crime, any one of which I may elect to commit. You will instruct me in all three of them."

"In that case, you will have to pay three times the regular tuition."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"That will make no difference to me," he said, "unless, of course, your prices are prohibitive."

"I don't think you will find them so, Mr. Antwerp."

"What amount, then, am I expected to pay for the tuition I am to receive?"

"For the three separate instructions?"

"Yes."

"My charges are five hundred dollars in each case: but I will put them all in for an even thousand."

"Making a sort of a job-lot of them, eh?"

"Yes."

"All right. It's a go. Begin."

"But you must first mention to me the three crimes in which you wish to be instructed."

"To be sure. To be sure."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER'S UNKNOWN ENEMY.

"What three crimes do you wish to commit?" asked Peters.

"I have not said that I desire to commit any crime. I have said that I wish to receive your instruction for three."

"Oh, well; we beg words. What are they?"

"We will call them as follows: Abduction, forgery, murder. Rather a formidable trio; no?"

"Yes. Shall we take them up in the order named?"

"If you please."

"Have you brought the money with you to pay for the tuition?"

"I was told by your very attractive partner, Miss Mason, that it was unnecessary," replied the detective. "I asked her if it were necessary that I should bring money with me to-day, and she said it was not. However, I can give you a substantial part of the sum, and she can get the remainder of it when she takes me back to the city, as I suppose it is her intention of doing."

"H'm! I think we can arrange it."

"Do I receive all the instruction that will be necessary in one lesson, Peters?"

"Hardly. But we won't cross our bridges till we get to them. What sort of a person is it whom you wish to abduct? A man, a woman, or a child?"

"We will say, by way of illustration, that it is a woman."

"I see. H'm! Healthy, strong, and all that?"

"Well, if you should take Miss Mason as an apt illustration, you would not be far wrong."

"Good. Is it your desire to commit this act without the assistance of others? In other words, is it your wish to avoid the use of accomplices?"

"Naturally. A secret that is shared by a second person ceases to be a secret."

"True."

They were interrupted at that moment by a gentle tap upon the door, which opened immediately, admitting Pauline again. She bore a tray upon which was a small pot filled with steaming and fragrant coffee, two cups, some cream, and sugar.

"I thought, Mr. Antwerp," she said, smiling, "that, after the rather long ride out here, a cup of coffee might not go badly if served at once."

She brought a small table forward between the two men, placed the tray upon it, and passed out of the room again; and, while she did so, Peters deftly poured the two cups full of the fragrant fluid.

"Will you take sugar and cream?" he asked. "Or here, you can help yourself," and he passed over one of the cups he had filled, and then poured some cream and put three lumps of sugar into his own. "I am a coffee-drinker," he added, lifting the lower part of his mask and sipping at the beverage.

"I should think," remarked the detective dryly, "that the bulbs you carry in your cheeks, and the mask, also, would interfere with your pleasure in drinking it."

"Oh, not at all. That is why I asked Pauline to make it strong."

Regarding his own cup of coffee, Nick hesitated. But it certainly had an appetizing odor, and, besides, Peters was sipping his own with great enjoyment; it had been poured from the same pot, and there was no reason to suppose that there was any ulterior motive in offering him the coffee.

So he dropped two lumps of sugar into it, stirred it gently, and then raised it to his lips.

It was not too hot, and he sipped it gently for a moment, finally draining the cupful in one draft; and then he pulled a cigar from his pocket and proceeded to light it.

That is, he got as far as reaching into another pocket for his match-case; but he had not drawn it forth before a sudden paralytic sensation shot through his entire being, and, with a hoarse cry of anger and chagrin at his own carelessness, he started to his feet, overturning the table and its contents as he did so.

But the drug, whatever it was, that had been administered to him through the agency of the coffee

was not only wonderfully sudden in taking effect, but utterly paralyzing in its consequences.

He felt, throughout his entire body, as if he had suddenly been transformed into a pin-cushion into which millions of pins had been thrust; then deadly numb and incapable of motion.

The cigar slipped from his mouth and fell to the floor; the match-case followed it, falling from his now nerveless fingers; and then, like a wet rag that is dropped to the floor, his legs gave way beneath him and he collapsed utterly.

Strangely enough, he was conscious all the time.

The drug did not seem to affect his brain at all; only his muscles.

But they were paralyzed entirely. Lying upon his back on the floor, he sought to raise an arm and move his legs; he could do neither; and yet all the time he was perfectly conscious of everything that was going on around him.

He knew when the man who called himself Peters stepped forward over the débris of the fallen table and stood there over him, looking down upon him.

He could almost fancy the smile of derision that was on the fellow's face, behind that mask he wore.

Nick heard the door open, although he could not turn his head to discover who entered; but the voice of Pauline informed him as to that.

"Well?" he heard her say. "What next?"

"Nothing next—at least, not at present. Leave me alone with him for a time. I will call you when I want you."

"Very well."

"How much of the stuff did you give him, Pauline?"

"Exactly what you told me to; a double dose."

"Gee! He went down like a clod of earth."

Nick could hear the man as he followed the woman to the door and closed it after her; and he could also hear that they whispered together for a moment before she went out of the room, but he could not hear what was said.

After a moment Peters returned, and with a silk handkerchief bandaged the detective's eyes.

"There, my dear Carter," he said, and Nick was amazed that his identity should be known by this man who called himself Peters, "I think now that I may dispense with the bath-robe and the mask, although I will still keep the bulbs in my mouth that you guessed were there. You will find that the use of your voice is not seriously impaired, although your muscles will remain paralyzed for the next twelve hours. But the drug, oddly enough, does not affect the voice or the eyes."

Nick did not reply to him, and there followed a moment of silence; then:

"You walked directly into the trap, didn't you, Nicholas?" Peters asked.

Nick was silent.

"Sulky, eh? Oh, well, you will get over that. I suppose you are wondering who I am; eh?"

No answer.

"Well, I shall not tell you—at least, not at present. You would recognize my voice soon enough if it were not for these bulbs; and you would know my face if you could see it. I have worked for a long time upon this little plan of mine, Carter, and, oh, how beautifully it has panned out."

The fellow chuckled to himself; then he laughed aloud.

"That was a clever dodge, Carter, don't you think so? You would be surprised to know how many different people actually sought to answer that advertisement. You would, indeed. One would not suppose there were so many would-be criminals in the world who need only the requisite amount of courage to commit anything from picking a pocket to cutting a throat. You might as well answer me, Carter, for I know that you hear all I say, and that you have the power of speech."

"Oh, yes," replied Nick. "I hear you and I can speak."

"But you cannot move another muscle save those of the eyes and voice; eh?"

"No."

"That is a wonderful drug of mine, Carter. Tasteless, odorless, colorless—if you had even looked into your cup before I filled it, you would have seen nothing—unless you looked very closely indeed; but it acts quickly; eh?"

"Yes."

"I found out the secret of it among the little natives along the upper waters of the Orinoco, in South America. I was down there a couple of years—for my health, of course. It is my belief that you were looking for me at the time, and finally came to the conclusion that I was dead."

"Who are you, Peters?"

"Oh, Peters will do as a means of identity, at present. Later, perhaps, you may know; although I am not certain that I shall tell you at all. I hope you found Pauline to be a charming companion on your drive out here?"

"Quite so."

"Yes. I have no doubt of it. And now I suppose you are quite mystified about this affair, are you not?"

"Somewhat."

"Exactly. Well, I have no reluctance about satisfying your curiosity."

"Well?"

"I returned to this country about six months ago, after an absence of five years. I spent almost two of them in South America, as I have told you. The rest of the time was passed in Europe and other parts of the world. But that doesn't interest you."

"Not at all."

"When I returned here, six months ago, I found that my activities were severely handicapped by the fact of your existence. There was always the danger that you would recognize my work, and that would have been fatal, because, if you were made aware that I was still alive, and once again 'getting busy,' you would drop everything else, in order to hunt me down and put me—well, where you would say I belong."

"There is no doubt of that qualification, Peters."

"No; I suppose not—from your standpoint. But you see, I could not work at ease at all. I felt that one of us must get out of the country, and, as I hesitated to leave it again, I determined that it should be you who went; see?"

"Yes."

"So I set about planning a method. You will admit, won't you, that it was a good one?"

"That remains to be seen, Peters. It is not played out—yet."

"No; but it will be," was the significant rejoinder. "I thought of shooting you, of knifing you, of poisoning you—and I have another drug that would have accomplished that beautifully; but all three methods were dangerous."

"Somewhat."

"I wished to figure out a method by which I could accomplish what I wished to do, and escape the possibility of detection. Just the same sort of thing that I advertised; eh?"

"I suppose so."

"In fact, Carter, it was that very thought that led to the present plan. I realized that I must think of something new and original if I wanted you to bite. The result, you see."

CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA.

"I hit upon the idea of putting that advertisement in the paper," Peters continued. "I figured it out that you would see it, and that it would interest you, and I also figured it out that, if it did not interest you to the point of engaging you in the service of your own accord, to find out what it was all about, the police would feel that it suggested something that needed attention, and would apply to you."

"I will do you the credit to admit that you were far-seeing," said Nick.

"Oh, yes. I happened to know that you read that paper every Sunday, and that you invariably look at the personal column; the agony column, they call it, over on the other side; eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, after that I had the commissioner of police watched. He went to your house that same afternoon, and it was easy enough to determine why he went there."

"For you; yes."

"Well, after that I had you shadowed. I don't suppose you thought you *could* be shadowed successfully, did you?"

"I don't think I thought about it at all in this particular case."

"No; of course not. Well, Pauline did it."

"She did?"

"Yes; you will admit that she is a dandy, won't you? She was inside a coupé, and I was on the driver's seat, when you left your house to go to Jersey City, after the visit of the commissioner. You may have noticed that a coupé was standing on the opposite side of the street, near the corner, when you left the house that afternoon."

"No; I don't think I did notice."

"Well, it doesn't matter. You walked to Twenty-third Street, and took a car to the Pennsylvania ferry. The coupé followed you, and it followed the car. It drove upon the same boat on which you crossed the river. It followed the car you rode upon on the other side. It passed the house where you entered."

"That was all quite clever, Peters."

"You bet it was. One has to be rather more than clever to get the best of Nick Carter."

"I suppose that is intended for a compliment."

"Oh, no. It is intended to explain the fact that I knew just exactly what I was up against, that's all. Now, when you rang the bell at that door on Jersey

City Heights, I saw the greeting that you received, and I knew, therefore, that you were in the house of a friend."

"Yes?"

"And when you came out, although you were splendidly disguised, your friend made the mistake of coming to the door with you. If he had not done that, I might have let you pass, for you had made yourself up to look so much like him, whether you meant to do so or not, that I might have been mistaken. But his adieus on the door-step were unmistakable, so I had Pauline take your trail from there. I suspected what you would do."

"Did you, indeed?"

"Yes. She followed you to the hotel in Fourth Avenue. You know the rest."

"Yes."

"Say, Carter, you played the part of the ingénue in crime, to the queen's taste."

"It was entirely unnecessary, too, wasn't it.

"Yes; too bad, Carter. That was funny, though, when you arrived at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourteenth, and put your mark above the other one that I had already placed there."

"You saw it, did you?"

"Sure. I was up-stairs, *over* the saloon. I led you the rest of the chase that night, just to see how you would work it out; and I made the other marks to give you the impression that a real victim was biting."

"Did you? Well, you did not succeed. I was satisfied that it was the advertiser who had made the other marks."

"I'll tell you one thing, Carter; if I had not known who you were—if the ad had been entirely sincere and I had been looking for a real victim of the scheme, you would have fooled me completely. I would not have known you in your disguise, and the careful way in which you played your part would have blinded me utterly."

"Another compliment."

"Take it as you like. But you see I knew who you were all the time; and if I had not, you spoke in your natural tones when you entered this house, and that would have assured me at once. You see I am so used to your tricks, Carter, that I was in a little doubt about you when you entered this room; but when you spoke——"

"Well, what else? Now that you have got me, what are you going to do?"

"That, my dear Carter, is not quite determined yet. It will require some thought."

"Oh. I supposed you had planned it all out, already."

"For the most part, yes. But there are some details as yet unprovided for."

"What are they?"

"Well, there is your assistant, for example. He is on the trail, and he is a persistent little cuss, too. Patsy, you call him; no? Where is the other fellow—the one you used to call Chick?"

"Oh, he is around somewhere."

"Is he? Well, those chaps have got to be taken care of, too. You know, Carter, with Chick and Patsy counted in, you make of yourself a sort of hydra-headed detective. You may not have realized it, but you do."

"Oh, yes, I have realized it."

"Well, the outcome of this affair will be largely up to you, I suppose."

"How is that?"

"I am not sure that I am quite ready to tell you, yet. I think you had better have a few days of your present condition, first, in order to realize exactly the position you are in."

"I think I realize it already."

"Oh, no you don't——"

"No?"

"For example, the paralyzing effects of that drug you swallowed lasts about twelve hours, when it begins to wear off if more is not administered—which is easy."

"Doubtless—in my present condition."

"The effect of the second dose lasts a little longer—say two or three hours longer. The third one will approach eighteen hours in its duration. Have you sensed the significance of that?"

"Perfectly."

"The third dose will continue its effect for nearly if not quite twenty-four hours; the fourth one will extend to close upon forty-eight. The fifth one will last about a week in its effects. The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth are still more protracted in their consequences, and the tenth, my dear Carter, would paralyze you permanently."

Nick believed that he shuddered when he was told this, although there were no outward evidences of the fact.

He wished that he could see the face of the man who was talking to him; or that the human fiend would take those bulbs from his mouth so that the voice would be recognizable.

But he did neither; and after a moment of silence

he continued on in the same impersonal strain, as if he were discussing the simplest matters:

"So you see what you are up against, don't you?"

"I'm beginning to; yes."

"At the end of twelve hours, when the present effects of the drug begins to wear off, I shall administer another dose—and so on, to the end; to the tenth. But before I give you the tenth one, I shall offer terms."

"Terms?" said Nick, surprised, for till then he had no doubt that the real intention of his captor was ultimately to murder him.

"Yes."

"What sort of terms?"

"Oh, well, I won't mention them just yet. You should be in a proper condition of mind before I do that; and, besides, in the meantime, I wish to provide you with company."

"With company?"

"Yes. Those assistants of yours."

"Why?"

"My dear fellow, don't, I pray you, forget that you are hydra-headed, as I said a moment ago. In order to make the terms I will offer you, binding, your assistants must be parties to it."

"I see."

"In the meantime——"

"Well?"

"Nothing, save that you will be fed and cared for with tenderness, as befits you. Honestly, Carter, in spite of the fact that I ought to hate you, I rather like you."

"I suppose I ought to thank you for that."

"No. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for me to say that I admire you. Like is hardly the word. But you are plucky, you are smart, you are resourceful, you are as strong as three of me—and I admire all those qualities."

"I am also honest, and square, and truthful; do you likewise admire those qualities?"

"Infinitely—in another. Unfortunately I cannot practise them. My business will not admit of it. Carter, tell me truthfully, have you any idea who I am?"

"Not the slightest."

"You would like to know, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps, before I am called upon to administer the tenth dose of the drug to you—if it really must be done in the end—I will tell you."

"I have been trying to place you ever since you have been talking."

"Oh, you won't succeed. The fact is you never knew me personally."

"But you said I would recognize your voice if I heard it, and your features if I saw them."

"So you would; but you would recognize my voice because it is exactly like another voice that you once knew well. You would recognize my features, because I am almost an exact likeness of another person whom you had and have good reason to remember."

Nick was silent after that.

He began to realize thoroughly what a difficult position he was in.

He had departed from his own home without a suggestion to any person regarding his destination.

Nobody knew that he had had any idea of taking up the case of the advertisement. In fact, he had given a distinct impression that such was *not* his intention.

There was only one person who had any knowledge at all of his movements or intentions, and that was the friend who lived on Jersey City Heights, to whose house he had gone, and at whose residence he had adopted the disguise he now wore; and that was a friend whom he saw but rarely, and who had doubtless already dismissed from his mind all thought of the circumstance.

Truly, he was surrounded by circumstances that would be difficult to surmount.

Even at the hotel he was known only as Antwerp; and this man who called himself Peters would see to it that no suspicions about him would originate there.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MIDNIGHT FLIGHT.

Shortly thereafter Pauline reentered the room, and between his two captors Nick was lifted to a couch where a pillow was placed under his head.

Water was given him, and he found that he could swallow without difficulty, and he was also able to move his jaws.

But from his neck down he was as completely paralyzed as if he were dead, and in support of this idea, Peters laughingly told him that if a pin were jabbed into his flesh to the head, he would not feel it.

Presently Pauline brought a basin of warm water and with it washed away the evidences of Nick's disguise, removing the false gray mustache, and other-

wise restoring him to himself, so far as facial appearances went.

"Now, is there anything that I can do for you?" she asked him, not unkindly, when that was done. "It is my duty to wait upon you, Mr. Carter; I might say my pleasure, also."

"I think I would like a cigar," he replied, "if you would cut off the end for me, place it between my teeth, and then hold a lighted match for me to light it."

She gave him one at once, performing the little services he had requested. Peters had gone from the room, and Nick smoked in silence for a long time, thinking in a concentrated way of the difficulty into which he had so blindly walked.

Now, as he looked back upon the circumstances of the case, he wondered how he had been taken in by so palpable a subterfuge; but he decided that it was the very simplicity of it that had worked his undoing.

The idea of a trap in which to catch him had not once occurred to him, although traps had been set for him all his life, since he had been a detective.

Then he asked himself, "Who is Pauline?"

Somehow, he did not believe that she was Peter's wife.

"She might be his daughter," he thought; but he dismissed that idea, too. Then he asked her a question.

"How old a man is Peters?" he said.

"Who? Peters? Oh! To be sure. Really, you must not ask me any questions about him, because I cannot reply to them."

"Tell me at least what your relation to him is."

"No; I cannot tell you even that much."

"You are not his wife, are you?"

"No."

"His daughter?"

"No, indeed. He is not old enough for that."

"His sister?"

"I have already told you that I cannot answer your questions."

"Then you *are* his sister. You might as well have admitted it. I don't believe, Pauline, that you are a criminal, although you have a bad type of one for a brother. I haven't seen his face, you know, but I have seen yours, and studied it. I am rather good at reading faces, Pauline. By the way, is that really your name?"

"It is one of my names; yes."

"But Mason is not, is it?"

"No."

"If you are Peters' sister, it is strange that there is not something in your face to remind me of whom he might be."

"No. It isn't strange. I am only his half-sister. We had different fathers, but the same mother. I resemble her."

"I see; and he looks like his father, eh?"

"So he tells me. In fact, he has a picture of his father, taken when he was about the age that—er—Peters is now. It looks as if he sat for it, or, rather, stood for it. It was taken standing."

"Standing, eh? That is a favorite manner of taking photographs in Paris."

"That is where it was taken," she replied, before she thought; and then she bit her lip with vexation, and without another word turned and left the room.

"So," mused the detective. "The picture was taken in Paris, was it? And when his father was about the same age that Peters is now. I wonder if I can figure anything out of that? Hardly. Paris, eh? What American crooks have I had to do with over there? Let me think."

For the next hour he went over his own career in detail, recalling, as best he could, every one he had known as a crook of any kind who had spent some time in Paris; but at the end of that time he had to acknowledge to himself that he was as far from a solution of the problem as ever.

The day lengthened to evening, and Pauline again appeared.

This time she brought food and sat beside him while she fed him, cutting the chop she had evidently cooked herself, into the tiniest of pieces so he could masticate them without difficulty.

While she was feeding him, she said, casually:

"You will have another ride in the automobile, presently."

"Is that so?" asked Nick. "You are not satisfied with this place, as a permanent residence, eh?"

"No; not entirely."

"Where are we going?"

"I may not tell you that."

"When are we going?"

"As soon as—er—Peters is ready."

"If you are not careful, Pauline, you will presently let that other name slip out unawares. It has been on the end of your tongue several times."

"I shall be careful," she replied.

It was about an hour later, and had grown quite dark outside, when Nick heard the noise of an automobile passing the windows of the room he was in;

and presently he knew that it had come to a stop at the rear of the house.

Peters had been wise enough to bring it around to the back door before he loaded his captive into it.

Then Peters entered the room, but now he wore a huge false beard which effectually concealed his features, and in addition to that a wig covered his own hair while his eyes were hidden behind a pair of chauffeur's goggles.

"You don't intend that I shall know you, do you?" said Nick, smiling.

"No," was the short reply. "At least not at present."

"But you have forgotten that I have already seen your chauffeur, and that I do not forget faces."

"On the contrary, Carter, I remembered it before I engaged his services. He hasn't the least idea who engaged him, and he has already gone. You are not likely to see him again, ever, and if you should, he will know no more than you do. Merely that he brought you from the hotel to this house."

"How are you going to get me out there to the automobile?"

"Pauline and I will carry you."

"You know that I cannot sit erect, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I have arranged for all that. You will be quite comfortable."

Presently they lifted him off the couch upon a blanket, and while Pauline grasped it at Nick's feet, Peters took the other end, and so he was borne outside to the waiting car.

There was some difficulty in depositing him inside the hooded tonneau, but it was accomplished at last.

A platform had been arranged between the seats, and Nick was settled upon that, with his back against the cushions at the rear, so that if there had been any feeling in his legs at all he would have been quite comfortable; as it was, only the sensation of numbness bothered him.

Then Peters placed a pair of goggles over his eyes, the glasses of which had been soaped, so it was quite impossible to see anything at all through them, for they were provided with side lights as well as front ones; and since it was impossible for Nick to move his hands at all he was effectually blinded.

"I'll take off my whiskers now," announced Peters, laughing. "You told Pauline that you knew the roads around here perfectly; but I think it will puzzle you to determine where we go. How do you feel?"

"I don't feel at all, thank you," replied Nick, with sarcasm; and Peters laughed.

"That's so," he said. "I had forgotten that fact for the moment."

Two straps were buckled around Nick, to retain him in his position, and then, after Pauline had climbed into the tonneau beside him, the big machine started away.

For a time Nick endeavored to keep track of the turns and directions taken by the car; but at last he decided that it was of no use anyway, and he abandoned the idea, satisfied that if the moment came when he was permitted action again, as well as sight, he would not be long in determining where he was.

He did not know the exact time of their start, but guessed that it was about eight o'clock in the evening.

Rather tired with all the exertions of the day, he presently fell into a doze and from that into sound sleep which continued until he was awakened by a sudden jar.

"Gee!" he heard Peters say. "That was a narrow squeak; and then he heard other voices and he realized by what was said that in rounding a curve they had actually collided with another car, but that both had managed to stop in time so that they had barely touched.

The idea came to him like a flash that he would appeal to these strangers, and he was on the point of putting it into practise when Pauline whispered in his ear:

"Mr. Carter, if you attempt to speak to those men you will be rendered unconscious before you can say three words. I have a hypodermic syringe in my hand. The point of the needle is already penetrating your arm, although you do not feel it. If you utter a sound I will have to press upon the piston, and you will not like the consequences—nor will I like the duty; so relieve me of its necessity."

"All right," he replied. "I won't speak. You can take my word."

She sighed, and he knew that she had drawn away from him again, accepting his word, although he had no sense of feeling to tell him so.

After a little the two cars were backed away from each other, and then the journey was continued.

"Where are we now?" asked Nick of his companion.

"You have not kept our course in mind?" she returned.

"No. I have not tried to do so. I have been sleeping."

"I thought so."

"Where are we, if you will tell me?"

"I really do not know myself," she replied.

"You believed me just now, didn't you? And withdrew the hypodermic?"

"Yes."

"Thank you for that. I won't lie to you, Pauline, if you will promise to believe me."

"I will take your word," she said. "I do not lie myself. I don't think you do, either."

CHAPTER IX.

WHERE PATSY GETS TO WORK.

And now, if the reader will pardon the apparent digression, which is not really a digression at all, since it is all consecutive in the relation of the history of this case, we must return to Patsy, and the assignment given him by the detective.

Patsy's method was to watch only one of the corners where the figure four was to be made in chalk by "any person contemplating a crime"; and so he established himself at an upper window of a restaurant which is nearly opposite that one of the corners located at Eighth Avenue and Twenty-third Street.

From that point of vantage Patsy saw Nick when he appeared at that corner the first night, and made the mark with the chalk in the end of his cane.

The lights on the corner were so bright that he could see as plainly as if it had been daytime.

Patsy also saw another man appear and make the same mark evidently; and then another; and he made no attempt to follow any of them.

Of course he did not recognize Nick at that distance, and under the circumstances. He had returned to the house that afternoon to receive Nick's note in which the assignment was announced, and he had been told by Joseph that the detective was gone out of town, so as a matter of fact he had no idea that Nick had interested himself in the case at all.

Before he went to work upon it himself he called upon the commissioner and heard what he had to say.

As we already know, Nick made no marks the second night of his rounds, but only looked on; but Patsy saw and recognized him at the same corner, for the same man he had seen before.

It will be remembered that at that time Patsy was standing near the telegraph-office, across the street.

He followed Nick to the hotel, then, inquired who he was and left there, determined that when he appeared the following night he would take his track and keep it to the end; for he had not abandoned the idea that he had told to Nick, of following the victim and letting that person ultimately take him to the advertiser.

But, as we know, Nick was in Philadelphia the following night, and the next one, too; and as it happened, when he did make the circuit again, after his return following upon seeing the personal in the paper, Patsy missed seeing him.

Patsy had visited the hotel, and been told that Mr. Antwerp had gone away, so he decided that the man had given up the idea of learning how to commit a crime, from a teacher.

During the other nights of the week, however, he saw others make the figure four on the pavement, and he followed one of them; and this man he kept in view.

But it may as well be told here and now that nothing came of it, for Peters had no interest in anybody save Nick Carter, and paid no attention whatever to the others who had swallowed the bait of his advertisement.

On Saturday of that week Patsy again visited the hotel where "Mr. Antwerp" had stayed, and was told that the gentleman had again been there and gone; that he went away in an automobile with a lady who called to see him; that he had later sent the amount of his bill to the hotel together with a request that his bag be given to the messenger, and that was all that was known about him.

He realized then that the man he should have followed and kept under his eye had escaped him; that it was that very man whom the advertiser had doubtless selected as his prey, and that he must begin all over again.

But where?

He had no idea. The week was up now. There would be no more chalk-marks made unless another advertisement should appear, and that was extremely unlikely.

True, he had kept the second man of his selection under surveillance, but as far as he could determine no effort had been made on the part of the advertiser to communicate with him.

Patsy felt that he was up a tree, so far as the case

was concerned; and he went to the commissioner and told him so.

"I am rather afraid that I have made a botch of it," he said.

"Oh, no; I guess not," replied the official. "What has become of Nick?"

"I don't know."

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Haven't you heard from him since he went away?"

"No; not at all."

"Look here, Patsy, don't you suppose that Nick was fooling both of us all along, and that he is really working on this very case?"

"Eh?" said Patsy; then he slapped his knee and laughed. "I shouldn't wonder a bit if you are right about that, commissioner."

"I, either. It would be like him, wouldn't it?"

"It might be. I know that the case interested him; and say——"

"Well?"

"If we are correct about it, he is the man who called himself Antwerp. I'd bet a brown cooky on it."

"Antwerp? Who are you talking about?"

Patsy told him.

"Well," said the commissioner, "isn't there any way of finding out if Antwerp was Nick? Isn't there a way? I would like to know."

"Possibly I can think of one."

"Try it."

When Patsy returned home he called Joseph to him and questioned him.

"Joseph," he said, "when the chief went away last Sunday, what did he say as to where he was going? It is important that I should know."

"He said nothing save that he was going out of town, sir."

"Have you any idea where he went?"

"None at all, sir."

"What bag did he take with him?"

"The small Gladstone, sir."

"What did you put into it?"

"Nothing. He packed it himself."

"Well, go to his room and rummage around. When you return I want you to tell me what he took with him."

"Yes, sir."

When Joseph returned a little later he announced: "The chief took one change of linen, some collars and cuffs, extra ties, a suit of gray tweeds and a soft, dark-gray Stetson hat. His small make-up box and his toilet articles."

"Thank you. That will do. So it was he who was posing as Antwerp, after all," he added to himself.

Patsy dropped upon a chair and set himself to figuring out, if possible, where his chief had gone that afternoon.

"He told Joseph that he was going out of town," mused the young detective, "and therefore he *did* go out of town. The chief is punctilious about truths and untruths, and if he says he is going out of town, he *goes* out of town. He was back here at or before eight o'clock that night; that I know; so it follows that he did not go very far out of town.

"Brooklyn? No; that isn't out of town. Jersey City? Sure! That is out of town and is the most easily reached place from here, that is out of town. He probably went to Jersey by the Twenty-third Street ferry.

"Why did he say he was going out of town? Because he didn't wish me to know that he was going to work on the same case. Now, where did he go after he got to Jersey City? There is no hotel worth the name, near the station, since Taylor's was torn down; and, anyhow, the chief doesn't like to make use of hotels for altering his disguise, unless it is a big one. No; it was more likely the home of some acquaintance that he went to. Now, who does he know over there?"

Patsy ascended to the study and let himself in with his key. Then he took down the letter-book where Nick's business letters were copied, and went through the index thoroughly, examining only the addresses; paying no attention to the names.

He found no Jersey City address at all in that book, so he put it aside and went through the one that preceded it.

They were big, thick, heavy books, and when Patsy was almost at the end of the third one he examined, he came upon an address in Tuers Avenue, Jersey City Heights. The name used in connection with it was Martin Goodale.

Patsy turned to the letter that was indexed, and read, "Dear Martin: I have only just returned home after a considerable absence, and found your letter awaiting me;" etc.

That was enough for Patsy's purposes. The letter was written two years before, but it began, "Dear Martin," which was enough to assure the young in-

vestigator that Martin Goodale was a friend to whose house the detective might have gone to make the change in his disguise.

Patsy next looked in the telephone-book, but discovered that Mr. Goodale did not have a telephone, so he grasped his hat and left the house, and in the course of time presented himself at the address he had found in the letter-book.

It was then evening and Patsy had figured that it was a good time to find the man he sought at home.

In this he was not disappointed, for Mr. Goodale came to the door in person.

"I have never met you, sir," said Patsy, as soon as he was inside the house, "but I am Patrick Garvan, second assistant on the staff of your friend Nick Carter."

"Oh, yes! I have heard Nick speak of you. Calls you Patsy, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Nick was over to see me not long ago."

"Yes. That is what I am here about now. It was last Sunday afternoon, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"And he changed himself into a disguise while here, did he not? Gray mustache, gray tweed suit of clothes, dark-gray hat, and all that?"

"Yes; that describes it exactly."

"Do you happen to know anything about his movements after he left here?"

"Not a thing; only——" He paused.

"Only what, please? That is what I wish to find out; all about the onlies."

"Well, when he was leaving me I followed him out upon the steps and bade him good-by out there. Just as he walked away I noticed for the first time that a coupé was standing a little way up the street on the opposite side, and as he went away a woman leaned out of the window and spoke to the driver. Then the cab followed along after Nick. It may have been my imagination, but I got the idea at once that they had been waiting and watching for him."

"I guess you were right about that, Mr. Goodale."

"I was impressed so strongly with the idea that for a moment I thought seriously of chasing after him and telling him about it. Then I dismissed the thought."

"That is all the information you have to give me, sir?"

"Yes."

"In that case I will thank you and say good night."

"But wait a moment. Has anything happened to him? To Nick?"

"I don't know; but that is exactly what I am trying to find out."

CHAPTER X.

A HIDDEN TRAIL.

When Patsy saw the commissioner a little more than an hour later he related what he had discovered, and closed by saying:

"And now, commissioner, it is apparent to me that the whole thing was a plant, right from the start."

"A plant. What do you mean by that?" replied the official.

"I mean that the advertisement was put into the paper for the sole purpose of attracting Nick Carter's attention and yours. Whoever the man may be who did it, he knew that the very oddity of that advertisement would attract Nick Carter's attention. Doubtless he figured it out also that you would see it, and perhaps call upon the chief, as you did, to talk about it."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, the chief is very much in the way of some of the crooks who infest this town, or who would like to infest it if he were not here. Every now and then some of them try to get him put out of the way. This looks to me like one of the attempts."

"It seems to me that you are giving the crooks credit for a degree of shrewdness which I don't believe they possess."

"Maybe you do not; but I do."

"Why?"

"The very fact that Goodale told me about the carriage, makes me think so. Don't you see that they haven't bothered themselves about who was making chalk-marks on the pavement. It was only necessary to follow Nick himself, to find out if he had taken the bait."

"Well? Go on."

"They saw him enter Goodale's house, and come out of it again in disguise. It was not difficult for them to recognize him when he did that, for Goodale followed him to the door. After that they just played the rest of their game, knowing that the chief would play into their hands."

"Why should he play into their hands?"

"Why? Because he was passing himself off as a chap who wanted to be taught how to commit a crime

without being caught at it. It seems that there is a woman in the case, too."

"At least there was one in that coupé; eh?" smiled the commissioner.

"Yes; but there was another one, too; or, at least, the same one in another place."

"How is that?"

"Nick went to a hotel on Fourth Avenue; he lived there under the name of Antwerp. He gave up his room and went away once; I don't know why, nor where he went. Thursday night he returned there. Friday morning a woman called there to see him. I did not learn her name; but after a while he went away with her in an automobile. He did not return, but later a messenger appeared there and paid his bill, and took away his grip. Now, what do you make of that, commissioner?"

"What do you make out of it?"

"I make it out that when he went away from that hotel in a motor-car he was led directly into a trap of some sort that had been laid for him, and——" Patsy rose and crossed to the window, where he remained a moment in silence; then he returned, and resumed: "And now, by this time, he is either dead, or he is at least in grave danger."

"Nonsense, Patsy! Nick Carter isn't one to walk into traps so easily."

"No; not when there is the least suspicion of the existence of one. But in this case he was working under a disadvantage. He could not suspect a trap, or a plot against him in this matter. There was nothing whatever to suggest it."

"But why are you so certain of it, even now?"

"Because of the manner in which the whole thing has been done."

"Oh, well, he is quite capable of taking care of himself. He has done it successfully a good many years, you know."

"I know that. But think a moment. Put your mind on that fellow who inserted the advertisement in the paper."

"Well?"

"A man who would think out a scheme like that one, for putting Nick Carter off his guard, is a pretty slick article."

"I'll grant you that much."

"And one who would not neglect the lesser details of making the rest of the program perfect. The woman, you see, must have been only a go-between. She would represent herself as the agent of the man who advertised. She would invite Nick to accompany her somewhere, for an interview with him. The chief would go, because that was the very thing he was looking for—an interview with the man who advertised."

"Yes. That is so."

"He was perfectly disguised—even I did not recognize him across the street—and it would not occur to him that the advertiser would suspect his identity, least of all, that it was already known."

"I see. I see."

"So he has fallen into the trap. Gee, but I wish I could get a description of that automobile."

"Can't you?"

"I can try; but I'll have to wait till morning now."

"Why so?"

"The hotel is the only place where I could get it. The door-boy at that entrance where the car stood is the only person who would be likely to remember it, and if he was on duty in the morning, then he won't be on duty till morning now."

"Do you want any help from this office, Patsy?"

"No; not unless I send for it. If I should want it I'll let you know."

"All right. Keep me informed."

"Sure."

The following morning early Patsy was at the hotel, and he addressed himself directly to the boy at the swinging door at the side entrance.

"Listen to me," he told the colored boy. "You will get a substantial fee if your memory is any good at all."

"Yes, sir," grinned the negro.

"Last Friday morning there was a gentleman stopping here named Antwerp. He——"

"Yassir. I recalls him, sure."

"A lady called for him. She came in an automobile. The car probably waited outside here, near this entrance. Mr. Antwerp went away in that car with the lady. Do you remember those circumstances?"

"Yassir; I does. You jes' bet your life I does, boss. That nigger who was drivin' de car used to work in de same place as I did. He got out and came to the do' and talked with me, when I done called him."

"Good. Your fee is getting bigger every minute. Did he tell you where he was going when the lady came out again?"

"Yassir. To Mamaroneck."

"Did he say anything about the street and the number of the house?"

"No, sir."

"Could you find that colored gentleman for me, do you think, or give me any idea how he could be found?"

"Well, I don't know about dat. He was along here ag'in yesterday, and said he wasn't workin' for dat party no more. I asked him what he was doing an' he said he was workin' at a public garage somewhere on Broadway. An' it must be near Forty-second Street, for I heard him say he was going to Times Square from here."

"What is his name?"

"Julius Thompson."

"What is his complexion?"

"Well, sir, he's mos' es dark as I is; not quite. Jes' a lil mo' on de chocolate."

Patsy spent the next hour and a half in going from garage to garage and from dealer to dealer along automobile row, and finally he found his man.

Julius Thompson grinned all over his face when Patsy told him what was wanted.

"Sure, boss, I recalls it," he said. "Ef you'd jes' take one of dese cabs and ask de boss to let me run it fo' you, I kin take you there in no time."

"All right. Get out your car; a good, speedy one, too."

"Yassir."

Of course when they arrived at the house in Mamaroneck it was deserted. There was a sign on it which read, "To Let, Furnished," and Patsy had himself driven around to the agent whose name appeared on the sign.

"I'm sorry that I cannot give you any information about those people," he told Patsy, as soon as the inquiry was made. "The man took the house and paid a month in advance, of course; but he left it at the end of a week, without saying a word."

"You do not know where he went to?"

"No more than you do, sir."

"Can you—but no; that isn't necessary. How much family had he?"

"There was just himself and sister, he said."

Patsy returned to Julius.

"Now," he said, "I want you to tell me all you know about that man, and the woman who was with him."

"Golly, boss, I don't know nuffin' about either of them," replied Julius. "I never done seen de man when he looked twice alike, nohow; and I never done heard him speak when he sounded twice alike, either."

"He always wore some sort of a disguise, eh?"

"Yassir. That's it."

"How about the woman?"

"She was as purty as a peach. I don't reckon she's mo'n twenty years old, neither."

"Was she his wife?"

"No, sir. Sister. Leastwise, dat's what I heard him call her sometimes; jes' sister."

"How long did you work for them?"

"Jes' from Monday mornin', sir, till Friday noon; but he done paid me fo' two whole weeks, and I was satisfied."

"I suppose you left this town right away when he told you he was through with you."

"Yassir."

"Didn't you think it strange that he fired you so soon?"

"No, sir. He done told me that he wanted me only for about a week, maybe less, but dat he would pay me fo' two weeks."

"I see."

"I suppose you would recognize that car if you should see it again, eh?"

"Sure, boss."

"And can you describe it for me along the road, so that any one who knows anything about an automobile would remember it if it had been seen?"

"Yassir."

"Then we will do a little searching around this neighborhood to see if we can get some trace of it. That is the only plan I can think of now."

"Yassir."

CHAPTER XI.

THE IDENTITY OF PETERS.

Patsy kept Julius Thompson with him for a week, and during that time they searched everywhere.

But it was done entirely without success.

Nowhere could a person be discovered who remembered to have seen the automobile in question, and at last, in despair, Patsy gave it up and returned to the city.

Whatever had been done with Nick Carter, it was evident that he had been spirited away by somebody who was a master hand at the business.

At the expiration of the second week following upon the disappearance of the detective, Chick returned home, and he also took up the case.

But the trail was utterly blind, and at last even he began to despair.

There was not a clue anywhere to go upon. From

the moment the negro Julius left that house in Mamaroneck, nothing was known of any of the persons who had been there.

The people in the house nearest to it did remember seeing or hearing an automobile when it was run into the yard that evening; but they did not recall its going out again, and consequently could give no idea in which direction it had turned.

"It is too bad," the commissioner told Chick one day. "You fellows take cases for other people and work them out in a surprisingly short time; but now, when you have a case of your own which is of vital interest to you, you can't do anything with it."

"That seems to be true," agreed Chick.

"I have had some of my own men on the case, without telling you about it," the commissioner continued; "but they are as badly stumped as you are."

"I'm only sure about one thing in connection with it," said Chick.

"What is that?"

"That Nick is still alive."

"How are you so sure as to that?"

"Oh, well, it is a feeling I have, that's all. If Nick were dead, I think I would know it."

"That is pure sentimentality, Chick."

"Call it what you please, commissioner."

* * * * * * *

Nick Carter was reclining at full length upon what is commonly called an "invalid's chair." Beside him, with a book on her lap from which she had been reading aloud, was seated Pauline.

"I certainly ought to feel greatly indebted to you, Pauline," the detective said presently. "You have done all you could to render my forced inactivity less tedius. But I have forgotten the flight of time. How long have I been here?"

"It will be four weeks to-morrow since we came to this house," she replied, with a smile that was somehow filled with sadness.

"How many doses of that drug have I had, Pauline?"

"Seven, Mr. Carter."

"It is not pleasant to contemplate, Pauline—the taking of that hideous drug that steals all the power out of my muscles. It reminds one of the story of Samson and the shorn locks, doesn't it?" he added whimsically.

"How can you joke about it, Mr. Carter?" she asked in reply.

"Well, I might about as well joke about it as cry about it. There doesn't appear to be any help for it, Pauline. Do you know, I have sometimes thought that if it were in your power—if you dared—you would help me to get out of this."

"Hush! *Hush!* Don't say it! Don't even whisper it! Don't think of it!"

"But I have thought so, just the same."

"And I never cease to think about it."

"Really, Pauline?"

"Yes," she murmured. "But you must not talk about it. You must not."

"But, Pauline, I must say this much. You have given me new hope. Now, if only Peters could be persuaded to entrust the administering of the dose of paralyzing poison to you——"

"Hush, I tell you. I think I hear him coming."

"Why, Pauline, one would think you were nervous."

"I am. I hate all this. I hate it all. It is terrible. I would rather be dead than to do what I am compelled to do here. And to think that it was I who prepared the first dose for you. I can never forgive myself for that."

"Oh, well, I forgive you. Don't forget that. No matter what may come of it, consider yourself forgiven."

"Oh, Mr. Carter——"

"There; that will do for that. You wouldn't do the thing again, would you?"

"No, indeed, I would not."

"Hark! I guess you were right. Peters is coming. No; he has turned back again. Pauline?"

"Yes?"

"I wish, if you want to do me a favor, you would tell me who he is. It wouldn't do much harm for me to know now, would it?"

"Oh, I don't know. I want to tell you, and yet—*I will* tell you."

"That's right."

"Only you must remember to show the proper amount of astonishment at the information, when *he* tells you."

"I will. Never fear."

"Did you ever know a man named Livingston Carruthers?"

"What!" exclaimed the detective, although it was impossible for him to raise his voice above a very moderate tone. "Livingston Carruthers, the diamond smuggler?"

"Yes."

"Indeed I did know such a man. He was the smart-

est and slickest, the smoothest, and the handsomest all-around crook I ever did know. But he is dead. He has been dead many years."

"Yes. I know that."

"Well, what of him?"

"He was Peter's father, that's all."

Nick was silent a long time. Then he said:

"You don't tell me. I remember now that Carruthers did have a young son who was away at boarding-school or college. So Peters is his son, eh?"

"Yes; and his right name is also Livingston Carruthers."

"Well, well, well. Roguery seems to run in the family. There was a brother, too; this fellow's uncle. He is also dead."

"Yes."

"And Mrs. Carruthers married again, and became your mother? Eh?"

"Not the Mrs. Carruthers you know. She was his second wife. My mother secured a divorce from Livingston's—from Peter's father, and married again. Afterward he married again, also; and that was the Mrs. Carruthers whom you knew."

"Wonder upon wonder. But of course; if you were the daughter of the Mrs. Carruthers I knew, you would be only about sixteen now. Of course. I take it, Pauline, that you are not really very fond of your half-brother."

"I hate him."

"Then why do you serve him?"

"Because I fear him."

"Well, child, I see one thing very plainly now."

"What is that, Mr. Carter?"

"Why, that you must manage somehow to get us both out of this scrape, and after you have opened the way for me to get back the use of my muscles I will see to it that you won't have further cause to fear your unnatural half-brother."

"Oh, if I only could."

"There, there! A way will open to us somehow. I am sure of it."

"I don't know. I'm afraid there is not time, Mr. Carter."

"Not time? What do you mean?"

"He told me this morning that he is tired of this inactivity. He is going to make his proposition to you to-morrow night, and if you do not accept it, he is going to give you ——" She stopped.

"The rest of the drug?" asked Nick. "In order to have it all over at once?"

"That is what he says; but I fear—I fear——"

"That he intends to give me real poison instead?"

She bowed her head in silence; but in the affirmative.

"He seems to hate me, all right," mused the detective, aloud.

"He does. But more than all else, he fears you. But he hates you, too, because, as he says, you were the cause of the death of his father, and of his uncle."

"They only got their deserts."

"That does not alter the case so far as he is concerned."

"No; I suppose not. I suppose I could make a very good guess regarding what the terms will be that he proposes to offer me."

"Yes?"

"You do not know?"

"No. He has said no more to me than has been said in your presence."

"Well, he knows that I am a man of my word, and he will doubtless offer me my liberty on condition that I promise him immunity from the law, as far as I am concerned; on condition that I promise never to take the trail after him, nor to permit either of my assistants to do so; on condition that I will never identify him, and if he is arrested by another, on the further condition that I will stand for him. That will be about the size of it."

"And couldn't you promise that?" she asked him.

"Why, no. How could I?"

"But to save your life——"

"I would take it myself if I were guilty of making such a promise as that, Pauline."

"I don't suppose I can see it as you do."

"I couldn't make such a promise. It is out of the question."

"Then he will do all that he threatens," she murmured.

"Perhaps; but I don't think so, Pauline, because—shall I say it?"

"Yes."

"Because you are going to find a way to save us both."

"Hark!" she said. "He is coming this time."

"Yes. I hear his steps. Resume your reading."

And so it happened that when Peters entered the room he found that Pauline was reading aloud to their paralyzed prisoner.

"Upon my word," he said—and Nick started violently, although he did not move, for there was nothing to disguise the voice that uttered the words, and to Nick it sounded like a voice from the grave, so

like was it to the voice of the first Livingston Carruthers—"this is quite a domestic scene."

He chuckled a little and then stepped around where Nick could see him; and there was no disguise over his features.

"Look at me, Nick Carter," he said. "Do you know me now?"

Nick pretended surprise as well as he could, in his paralyzed condition. Then he replied:

"Yes. You are the son of Livingston Carruthers; or, at least, you look enough like him to be his son."

CHAPTER XII.

PAULINE MASON'S ATONEMENT.

Carruthers—for we will now so name him—chuckled.

"Didn't I tell you at the beginning that you would recognize my face and my voice, even though personally I am unknown to you?" he demanded, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Am I not the very counterpart of my father?"

"You certainly are."

"I wish I could remember him better than I do."

"It seems to me," remarked the detective dryly, "that you are following in his footsteps with remarkable aptitude."

"Oh, as to that, I know more about him, perhaps, than you suppose. I have read that 'Tracked Across the Atlantic' story that was written about him so long ago; and I have read others since then about his brother, my uncle. That is why I ought to hate you, Nick Carter."

"I suppose, from your standpoint, it is."

"Well, I can't say that I exactly hate you; but, nevertheless, I am bound to take out of you a certain portion of vengeance. I have endeavored to do it coolly and methodically; and now the time has come when I am ready to make the proposition that was suggested, but not named, between us, at the time of your capture."

"Well?"

"You see, Carter, it is this way: After due and careful deliberation I have determined to adopt a mode of life which will offend the law—of which the police will not approve. You are the only man I have reason to fear; not because I have already had any experiences with you, but because I know beforehand that a man who could overcome my father and my uncle as you did, is to be feared."

"You would have nothing to fear if you did right."

"That is precisely the point. I don't intend to do right. It isn't in me. I don't believe I could live rightly if I attempted it. There is that strain in me which is outside the law, or against the law, whichever way you choose to put it. Understand me?"

"In effect, yes."

"So——"

"What is the particular branch of villainy you have chosen to follow? Are you to be a smuggler of diamonds, like your father, or just a common thief and murderer, like your uncle? It would be interesting to know that."

"Well, you will have to find out all that for yourself—if you ever have the chance. Now as to the proposition."

"Yes?"

"If you will take your solemn oath on your word of honor—and I know that you prize it highly—that you will never interfere with me, and that you will bind your assistants, promising for them as well as for yourself, that you will not——"

"You may as well stop exactly where you are, Carruthers," Nick interrupted him, "for I will never take such an oath as that, and you knew I would not before you began to ask it."

"Then you are a fool."

"Possibly; but I would rather be that, in your estimation, than the knave you would make me."

"You refuse, then?"

"Absolutely."

"You have thought about the alternative?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am tired of dallying with you. If you persist in your refusal I shall lose no more time over you. I shall administer the last doses of the drug all at once, so that you will be paralyzed for the rest of your life. Then I shall send you back to your home, a living corpse; at least, it will amount to that condition. You will pass all the rest of your life in that condition, and you have endured it long enough now to know what it means; eh?"

"I shall not take the oath, nevertheless."

Carruthers now stood staring down into the detective's eyes, and there was an ugly expression on his face which rendered him more than ever like his father, Nick thought.

Neither of the men noticed that Pauline had slipped out of the room; but if they could have followed

her down the stairs and out upon the front porch, then along the concreted path to the front gate, they would have seen her pause there and wave her handkerchief frantically toward two men who were standing almost in the middle of the road at the adjacent corner—for this house was in the country, although the roads that passed near it were paved.

One of the two men saw her, and both hastened toward her.

As soon as they were within speaking-distance, she said to the one who was leading:

"I am Pauline Mason. Does that name signify anything to you?"

"Yes," replied the foremost of the two. "I am Chickering Carter, and this gentleman is Patrick Garvan. Now, Miss Mason, we received your letter telling us to come here and wait an hour on that corner. We had been there exactly fifty minutes when you appeared and waved your handkerchief. What have you to tell us?"

"You wish to find Nick Carter, do you not?"

"Need you ask the question?"

Pauline turned and pointed toward the house she had just left.

"He is in there," she said. "And the man who would do worse than murder him is with him. They are together in the rear room on the second floor. You will——"

She stopped, for there were no listeners.

Both of Nick Carter's assistants had turned almost at the first words she uttered and were already at the steps of the house, and as the door stood widely ajar, then passed inside without ceremony.

Pauline watched them until they had disappeared. Then she stepped behind a lilac-bush and removed from its place of concealment a hat she had hidden there, and a small traveling-bag; also a light wrap. Pinning the hat hastily upon her head and throwing the wrap about her shoulders, she picked up the bag again and went out of the gate. Nor did she once turn her head to look behind her. In a moment more she had turned the corner and disappeared; and at about the same moment Chick and Patsy pushed open the door of the room where Nick Carter was lying, and entered it.

If Carruthers heard them he paid no attention, doubtless supposing it to be Pauline.

He was bending over the detective with a glass in one hand and a spoon in the other; and they heard him say:

"After you have swallowed this, my dear Carter, life—that is, active life—will be over for you forever. You will be paralyzed, as you are now, all the rest of it, and you will——"

He got no farther than that.

The glass and the spoon were dashed from his hand and he himself was seized in a mighty grasp and whirled, and so sent spinning like a top across to the opposite side of the room, where he collided with the wall, and then fell to the floor in a heap; and the instant he touched it Patsy and Chick both fell upon him, pinioning him to the floor so that he could barely move, and could only struggle feebly.

And then while one of them held him, the other snapped the irons on his wrists and ankles, and Livingston Carruthers 2d was a prisoner indeed.

Chick and Patsy did not devote so much as a glance in his direction after that.

They both hurried to the side of Nick Carter, and were amazed when they encountered his eyes, smiling up at them.

"Why, Nick!" exclaimed Chick. "Oh, chief!" cried Patsy; and then the detective replied to them:

"It is not so bad as it might have been, lads," he said, "particularly if you had been a few moments later. I am paralyzed from my chin down, that is all. It was brought about by a drug of some sort that he gave me. But it is time for the present effects to wear off now. In an hour I will be able to move, and doubtless as well as ever. So don't worry. You can afford to wait two hours, can't you, now that you have found me? By that time I will be able to move about, I expect. Tell me how you managed to find me."

"I almost doubt if we ever would have found you, chief," replied Patsy, "if it were not for a young woman who calls herself Pauline Mason. She wrote a letter, addressing it to me, which told us to wait at a corner near here to-day, and a moment ago she came out and told us that you were in here."

They heard a cry from the opposite side of the room, and, turning, discovered that Carruthers had managed to raise himself to one elbow and was staring at them fiercely.

"So!" he cried out. "It was Pauline who did that, was it? I shall not forget it. I shall not forget it. Rest assured of that."

* * * * * * *

It only remains to be said that nearly three hours elapsed before Nick Carter was able to walk about again, and then with tottering steps; and more than a week passed before he was quite himself again. His limbs had been so long a time in disuse that it required time for them to reassume their normal condition.

Pauline had disappeared utterly, when Chick and Patsy sought her, and Nick believed that under the circumstances it was better so.

As for Carruthers, he was taken to the county jail and lodged there, for it was that county which claimed jurisdiction over him and his crime.

But on the way home from there Nick Carter turned to his two assistants and remarked:

"Lads, I am afraid that we have not heard the last of Livingston Carruthers 2d."

THE END.

The next number (1008) will contain "A Woman at Bay; or, Nick Carter's Great Burglary Case."

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THE CAPTAIN'S FATE.

By UNCLE NED.

"Only this one voyage, love, and I will lay up for life with you and our dear ones on shore!"

This was what Captain Frank Rue had said to his dear wife when she, with their children, stood in their little cottage near the Long Island shore, bidding him a tearful farewell ere he left to join his ship, the *Sea Foam*, then just ready to sail for New Orleans with a load of merchandise, to return with cotton for the Fall River mills.

"We have enough for us and our loved ones now, dear Frank. Why risk your life to amass more?" said his wife earnestly. "I never felt so melancholy at the thought of parting with you before. You are a two-thirds owner in the ship, and can say who shall be captain. Promote your first mate, Bob Duff. He has served you long and faithfully. Promote him to the captaincy, put Glynn in for first and Bishop for second mate, and you know the ship will be safe."

"Yes, dear, you plan admirably; but you do not know that I have a salvage case in New Orleans, which no one can attend to but myself. But take comfort, my darling. As you say, I have enough laid up to make us all comfortable for life, and this voyage shall be my last. So good-by, all; remember me when you pray."

And away went the strong, handsome man, trying to appear as cheerful as could be, but his lip was quivering and his eyes were moist as he hurried off to take the cars which even then sounded their approach.

Mrs. Rue and the children wept, as they, indeed, always did when the beloved father and husband left them for a voyage. His words, with her melancholy forebodings—"this shall be my last voyage"—rang like a knell in the wife's ears for hours and hours after he was gone.

For days now both wife and children watched the weather anxiously. It was nearly time for the equinoctial gales, but they hoped and prayed he would reach New Orleans before they came on, and not sail until they had passed by.

"Father has been gone six days, and has had a fair wind all the time," said little Frank, a ten-year-old "chip of the old block," who had been one voyage with his father, and who thought he knew all about ships and weather.

"The wind has been very light. The *Sea Foam* cannot yet have passed the Bahamas," said Mrs. Rue, with a shiver. "And the air feels cold and strange—I fear a storm is coming!"

"Yes, mama," cried the young oracle; "we had a mackerel sky at sunrise, and the hares'-tails are streaming overhead from the nor'east!"

But no storm came during the day, though the wind freshened as it changed from due west to the north of east.

That night, however, the inmates of the little cottage were awakened after twelve by a gale which shook the strong-built cottage from its gables to the foundation.

It seemed to Mrs. Rue, while she prayed and trembled, that never in all her life had she known such a fearful gale. Even though it shrieked around the house and among the bending trees in the pretty yard, she could hear the thunder of the breakers on the coast, miles and miles away.

"Heaven help our dear father on the sea!" she moaned, when her children dressed before the dawn, crept around her, sad and awestricken. Only little Frank put on a bold face.

"Father knows what he is about!" he said proudly. "He knows every sign, and would house down all snug before the gale came on."

"No housing of masts can keep him from the horrors of a lee shore!" sighed Mrs. Rue, while those words—"this shall be my last voyage"—rang like a knell in her ears.

For three days the gale continued, shifting to every point of the compass in its fury, and then it abated.

And now came days and weeks of terrible suspense. No letter from New Orleans to announce his safe arrival—nothing in the ship-news of the newspapers, read so carefully every day, about the *Sea Foam*.

Even poor little Frank had but one comfort for his mother now—he said, if the ship had been dismasted, she would drift north on the Gulf Stream, and papa would be every day coming nearer and nearer home.

But one morning the children heard a terrible shriek in the sitting-room, where their mother was.

The newsboy had left the paper, and she had glanced at the shipping-news and read these fearful words:

"From parts of a wreck picked up at sea in a southern latitude, it is feared that the ship *Sea Foam*, of this port, has gone down in the late gales, with all on board. A stern-frame entire, with the name *Sea Foam* on it, a quantity of boxes, baled goods, and some spars were distinguished, but the wind and sea were such that nothing could be picked up."

This was all, but poor Mrs. Rue thought it more than enough. Her dear, noble husband had taken his last voyage, indeed. Her children would see their dear father nevermore on earth.

* * * * * * * *

The cottage looked somber and sad, even though it was New Year's Day—Mrs. Rue in her sable dress, even the little girls in black, and not even a flower on the

dinner-table, usually made gay even in the winter-time, when the captain was at home.

All gathered to the meal, and all looked at the empty chair which little Frank had insisted should be set every day, in readiness for papa; for he said papa was a good swimmer, and would never drown, but would come home yet.

The snow was falling white and fast, and the fir-trees in the yard were fleecy in their soft beauty, but the sad wife and children hardly thought of looking out.

But suddenly, soon after the cars had arrived, for all had heard the steam-whistle, there was a cheery sound of sleigh-bells on the road, which grew louder and louder till a sleigh with foaming horses stopped at the door.

The next instant a tall form leaped out, and, as wife and children rose to see who was coming, Captain Frank Rue rushed in with a glad shout, just in time to catch his wife's form as she fainted with excitement and joy.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!" yelled little Frank. "Didn't I tell you all papa would swim ashore? And here he is!"

It was a true story this time, though a strange one. The ship had, indeed, foundered at sea, and all hands but the captain had been lost. But he was a strong and a brave swimmer, and he struggled hard to live for the loved ones at home. Heaven had helped him, and the noble seaman had gained a portion of floating wreck, from which he was taken by a ship bound to a part of South America from which no mail could reach home before the captain himself.

When he took the vacant chair at the table, after his wife and little ones had recovered from their glad surprise, the captain said:

"Dear ones, we will part no more until death knocks at our cottage door. I have, indeed, taken my last voyage."

INGENIOUS WAYS OF SMUGGLERS.

No article since duties were first levied in England offers such temptation to the smuggler as saccharin, partly because of the high duty on it, which amounts to $5 a pound, and partly because it lends itself so easily to concealment. The various seizures, principally in the east of London, which have been made recently, show that the smuggler is taking advantage of his opportunity and the revenue authorities are at their wits' end to cope with the illicit traffic.

As a matter of fact, spirits and tobacco, with all the romantic tales of adventure associated with them, are no longer fashionable with the smuggler. Saccharin has taken their place. Under ordinary circumstances saccharin, which is reckoned to be three hundred times sweeter than sugar, is imported in at least four different forms, the characteristic properties of which are: A white glistening crystalline powder, a dull white powder resembling icing-sugar, a white coarse granular powder, and crystals in small pieces of various sizes, similar in appearance to common alum.

Saccharin may be said to be illicitly imported in three principal ways. First, by the ordinary process of concealment; second, held in suspension or in solution in other goods, and third, under various chemical aliases and entered as free of duty. In regard to the first method, when it is remembered that a pound of saccharin can be comfortably stowed away in one's waistcoat pockets, the wide field open to the smuggler can be readily imagined. In fact, almost every conceivable stratagem is resorted to, and no doubt in the great majority of cases with success.

Saccharin has been found concealed in the center of bags of starch and sacks of flour, in sacks of potatoes, in casks of resin, in cases ingeniously made up to represent the tops of tables, in bottles labeled "Heath Salts," a small quantity of that article being placed on top to disguise the contents; in phosphates, in ingots of potash salt, of sulphamide benzoic acid, made up in the shape and appearance of night lights, in bags of sugar, even in bamboo canes, in fact, in almost every imaginable variety of casks and packages containing goods of an innocent description.

It is also to be feared that a considerable illicit traffic in this highly dutiable article is carried on by passengers passing to and from the Continent, and the means resorted to are as various as they are ingenious. In one recent case a passenger was discovered wearing a tight-fitting calico vest next his skin containing seven pounds of saccharin. In another case a belt passing in coils around the body was the means employed.

But the difficulties which confront the customs officer in regard to the personal running of saccharin are light indeed when we consider the innumerable articles of commerce in which it may be utilized or held in solution and imported free of duty. In such cases, as a rule, it is the analyst alone who can tell. Saccharin may be used in canned and bottled fruits, in aerated waters, in brandy, in syrup, in confectionery, in wafer paper, even in cigarette papers. It comes in biscuits, chocolate, cocoa powder, marmalade, preserves, marzipan, and thirst tablets. It is held in solution in glycerin, acetone, water, and a host of other solvents. Not long ago a small importation of roots roughly ground was subjected to analysis and found to be heavily loaded with saccharin, nothing whatever in the appearance of the goods suggesting the presence of this highly dutiable commodity.

And as if all those claims to the smuggler's favor were not enough, saccharin has something of the characteristics of the chameleon. It can be subjected to a process of mashing or denaturing, by which it is rendered perfectly tasteless, and the moment it has passed the revenue portals it can be restored to its original state by a reverse process. Truly an unequal contest for the poor customs officer!

THE AUTOMOBILE ON THE FARM.

Western agents of automobile factories assert that if the machines could be secured hundreds of autos could be sold this summer to the farmers of Nebraska and Kansas. As it is, the residents of country towns and the farmers are buying more of the benzine buggies than the cities, and there is scarcely a country town in Nebraska in which there are not more automobiles in proportion to population than in Lincoln or Omaha.

The prosperity of Western farmers has become an old story, and this prosperity is going to be augmented this year by another big crop of wheat and corn and oats. Most of the farmers in the State could buy a medium priced machine just as a luxury if they wanted to, but the manner in which they have amassed their money does not lead to extravagances of that kind.

When a Nebraska agriculturist adds to his machinery collection he buys only that which will be of use. That is why he is just now turning to the automobile. The favorite farm type is the runabout, largely because of its low first cost. The prudent farmer figures that with good carriage horses bringing $150 to $250 each in the market he is foolish to utilize them in his pleasure-jaunts and his journeyings to and from church. If he uses his work-horses to go to town or about the country he deducts just that much from their working capacity on the farm. By using an auto he saves the horses fresh for the farm work, he can transact his business quicker and get back to the farm in a short time, to his financial betterment.

The employment of the gasoline-engine on farms in the pumping of water for stock and in running threshing-machinery and grinders and shellers has familiarized him with this type of power and he takes hold of an automobile proposition with interest and enthusiasm.

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